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The ante-Nicene apologies















THE ANTE-NICENE APOLOGIES.





THE  
ANTE-NICENE APOLOGIES:

THEIR  
Character and Value.

BY  
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## PREFACE.

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THE Author has but few words to say by way of preface to his readers, and in them he would wish to commend his Subject rather than his Essay to their attention.

The Church has a deep and living interest in the Apologists; they fought a good fight as members of the Church Militant, and now, the victory won, are members of the Church Triumphant. If we love to dwell on the early history of our own nation,—if a halo of gratitude and reverence rests on the heads of those who were her strength and bulwark in her infancy,—with no less pleasure should we, members of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church;—a Society wider and nobler than any nation, and yet

binding her individual members together with closer than earthly ties—delight to read of our own early history, and with pride (and yet regret) look back on the time when almost every Christian was a hero—one “of whom the world was not worthy.” And, as we read, we may ask ourselves whether there is anything in the nature of things to prevent the golden age returning; whether the same sources of strength, the same principles of action, are not the inalienable inheritance of the One Church; whether our armour has not been long hanging up in our armoury, and whether we need be afraid to go because we have not proved it. And if we apparently see a time coming when few will speak well of the Church, when she may have to endure the spoiling of her goods; we can look back to our early annals, and take such things joyfully, knowing that we have in ourselves a better and an enduring substance. And if this is, as some say, the old age of the Church, we may hope that it may be, in the best sense of the words, a second childhood; that she may have the same simple faith and trust which then were hers, and if not the same eager



expectation of coming events, the calm looking and waiting which comes from experience.

We are all one body. The early Christians are not united to us simply by history ; they do not live merely in their noble deeds ; theirs is a far more real existence, and we are bound together by a much closer tie. They are living members of the One Church, and we believe in the Communion of Saints.



THIS ESSAY OBTAINED THE HULSEAN PRIZE IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE IN THE YEAR 1869.

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CLAUSES DIRECTED BY THE FOUNDER TO BE ALWAYS  
PREFIXED TO THE HULSEAN DISSERTATION.

CLAUSES FROM THE WILL OF THE REV. JOHN HULSE, late of Elworth, in the County of Chester, clerk, deceased: dated the twenty-first day of July, in the year of our Lord, One thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven; expressed in the words of the Testator, as he, in order to prevent mistakes, thought proper to draw and write the same himself, and directed that such clauses should every year be printed, to the intent that the several persons, whom it might concern and be of service to, might know that there were such special donations or endowments left for the encouragement of Piety and Learning, in an age so unfortunately addicted to Infidelity and Luxury, and that others might be invited to the like charitable, and, as he humbly hoped, reasonable and useful Benefactions.

He directs that certain rents and profits be paid to such learned and ingenious person in the University of Cambridge, under the degree of Master of Arts, as shall compose, for that year, the best dissertation, in the English language, on the Evidences in general, or on the Prophecies or Miracles in particular, or any other particular argument, whether the same be direct or collateral proofs of the Christian Religion, in order to evince its truths and excellence; the subject of which Dissertation shall be given out by the Vice-Chancellor and the Masters of Trinity and St. John's, his Trustees, or by some of them, on New Year's Day annually; and that such Dissertation as shall be by them, or any two of them, on Christmas Day annually, the best approved, be also printed, and the expense defrayed out of the Author's income under his will, and the remainder given to him on St. John the Evangelist's Day following; and he who shall be so rewarded, shall not be admitted at any future time as a Candidate again in the same way, to the intent that others may be invited and encouraged to write on so sacred and sublime a subject.

He also desires, that immediately following the last of the clauses relating to the prize Dissertation, this invocation may be added: "May the Divine Blessing for ever go along with all my benefactions; and may the Greatest and Best of Beings, by his all-wise Providence and gracious influence, make the same effectual to His own Glory, and the good of my fellow-creatures."

SUBJECT PROPOSED BY THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR 1869:—

*The Character and Value of the Christian Apologetic Literature of the  
First Three Centuries.*





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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE second and third centuries form one of the most important eras in the history of the Church; they make up that critical time when Christianity, unaided from without, stood upon its trial. No triumphs in its history have been so essentially the result of its inherent strength as those it then achieved. The more supernatural strength which marked the Apostolic period had passed away; what still remained flowed from a thorough conviction of its truth, and a complete surrender to its power. And whilst the arm of God was not so visibly stretched out to save, there was no arm of flesh to trust in. All the powers of the world were arrayed against the Faith. This was the battle day of the Church against the World. It ended; the triumph of the Church was complete; and never since have they been openly antagonistic, thoroughly hostile at heart, as they cannot but be. The World took the Church under her protection, and thenceforth Statecraft and State-power had their share in producing the Christian triumphs. Once again the conquered enslaved

its conqueror; the State had an outward garb of Christianity, but the Church had an inward source of corruption.

The Apologists were the champions of the Church, who bore the brunt of the battle when the Church stood alone. Their's was no easy task. They had to deal with men animated by the blindest hatred; the common people were their greatest enemies; and they hated with all the intense hatred of fanaticism, terror, and ignorance, and with all the unscrupulousness of divided responsibility. Behind them, encouraging them, were the Philosophers, rejoicing in the destruction of presumptuous men who spoke positively, whilst they still deliberated; 'who pretended to the exclusive possession of truth, and who were introducing into the world a new and vigorous superstition. Besides these, there was the power of Society dreading a revolution as the greatest of evils, whose framework was the old heathen religion; and when to all were added the powers of the Law, as was often the case, then the "enemy did indeed come in like a flood," and brave were the men who dared to "lift up a standard against him."

The case must not however be exaggerated. The Christians might have had a much more difficult task; such, for instance, would have been a conflict with Heathenism in the full strength of its youth; or with Judaism backed by authority; but Heathenism was old and sick unto death; it was only believed in by the



common people, and only supported by the authorities for political reasons; whilst the Jews were fugitives and vagabonds on the face of the earth. There was no great representative of heathen divinity, so that the alternative could be offered, "If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him."

Nor had the Christians, when attacking Heathenism, to walk in untrodden paths; they had little to do but to press home the arguments of the philosophers, and to call on men to put in practice their theoretical opinions, and to forsake a religion which they had exposed.

Nor, again, was there any system of philosophy which could be seriously placed in competition with Christianity. The philosophers did not pretend to speak with decision on any subject; their results were negative, not positive; the various systems were mutually contradictory; none of them had any elements of popularity, and they were essentially exclusive in their character. Thus the Christians had not to deal with a united foe, or a foe animated by deep-felt principles; but endeavouring, as they were, to overthrow the religion of the gods—a religion most closely united to the State, politically and socially—and to establish another in its place; they had to meet all the power of the Roman government, jealous of revolution; all the power of society, jealous of its honours and profits; all the power of the common people, jealous for their religion; and all the power of philosophy, jealous of superstition. Their task was no easy one, as history shows.

The main object of the Apologists was defence ; but this almost of necessity involved an attack on Heathenism. Christianity was, in its essence, intolerant ; it could allow no rival. It was not simply national, like every other religion of the world ;—it claimed to be *the* religion for the world. Its God was the only true God. All other religions were false ; their gods were evil spirits, mere men, or senseless wood and stone. Hence it is that every early defence of Christianity contains an attack on Heathenism, every Apology exposes the character of the heathen mythology ; and this deepened the character of the struggle. The Christians were not content with being let alone to worship their God in peace, what they sought was, to be left unmolested whilst endeavouring to overthrow the religions around them. They were struggling not merely for bare existence, but for supremacy. Heathenism, on the other hand, was fighting for its life ; and the feeling was when the heathen religion falls then Rome falls, and when Rome, the World.

With this necessary exception, the early Apologies are simply designed, in the main, to be defences against attack. Of the nature of Christianity, little was known till towards the end of the Apologetic period ; what was known was deduced from personal observation of the character of the Christians, and from popular rumour. Amongst the various motives which excited opposition in the minds of the heathen, zeal for truth was not one ; no heathen believed in the existence of absolute truth

in matters of religion ; at the best, his religion was only true for himself and his nation. The discussion then was not on abstract truth, but on particular results ; not on principles, but on men ; the Apologies are defences of Christians, not defences of Christianity.

This must be carefully borne in mind when we examine into their fitness to attain the object contemplated by their authors. We must judge of them not as answers to nineteenth century objections to the truth of Christianity, but as reasons for the toleration of second and third century Christians.

The above general statements must not be made without limitations. In the first place, we must except a few<sup>1</sup> of the Apologies entirely from them. What has been said is more absolutely true with respect to the design each had in view, than with respect to its execution. Their design, as avowed by themselves, is toleration ; but they use arguments which go beyond this ; they refute calumnies against themselves by shewing the morality of their teaching ; then they are unable to refrain from shewing the superiority of the religion they profess over that which they have forsaken ;

<sup>1</sup> The exceptions are—1. The Hortatory Address to the Greeks, ascribed to Justin. 2. The Letters of Theophilus to Autolycus. 3. The Epistle to Diognetus. 4. The work of Origen against Celsus. The *λόγος προτρεπτικός* of Clement. 6. The Divine Institutions of Lactantius. For their character, cf. chap. v. and vi. We must also mention here Justin's Dialogue with Trypho ; this Apology stands quite by itself, inasmuch as it is addressed to Jews, not to heathen : it will be considered separately in chap. v., and the general remarks must not be taken to apply to it.

to do this they find it necessary to give some account of its nature ; and they naturally find the best defence of themselves in the character of their religion. They wish to shew some motives for their mode of life, so different from that of all the rest of the world ; some reasons for despising all that others held most dear. The Christian practice was bound up with the Christian doctrine, and their conduct was utterly senseless and foolish, if their doctrine was not true. Thus they are drawn on to speak of the grounds of their belief ; to give, more or less, the Christian evidences.

We must not, however, expect a complete code of Christian teaching, and a formally drawn-out body of Christian Evidences in the Apologies. From the incidental character of their introduction we should anticipate that they were incomplete in character, and deficient in arrangement ; and this in fact is the case. We find that the Apologists do not so much teach, as prepare the way for teaching. They rather prove that Christianity is not utterly unreasonable, than that it is true. They remove stumbling-blocks, and excite curiosity for further research. Nothing can more clearly prove this than the way in which they cite the Sacred Scriptures ; they speak of their antiquity, simplicity, and harmony ; they refer to them as their great source of information ; but they rarely appeal to their testimony or authority ; they prefer to deduce arguments from other sources. The Apologies were not written to satisfy enquirers ; if they had, the case would have been



different ; Scriptural appeals would not have been out of place ; but their <sup>1</sup> essential characteristic is that they were written to conciliate an enemy, and the arguments used must be such as he would allow. What they claim is an enquiry ; for this they shew *primâ facie* grounds ; all we ask, they say, is that we may not be condemned unheard.

Such is the general view of the character of the Apologies. Their object is to defend Christians from misrepresentation and accusation. That they contain no digressions, or arguments which seem to indicate a design beyond this, we do not assert ; but this is their main design, and to it they more or less closely adhere.

The Apologies have, of course, particular features, as well as general characteristics. They have been divided into two classes. “One class,” says Neander, <sup>2</sup> “were expositions of Christian doctrine designed for the use of enlightened Pagans generally ; the other class had a more official character,—intended to advocate the cause of the Christians before emperors, or before the consuls and presidents of the provinces.” But this division is one of external object, and is not at all justified by the internal character of the Apologies. There is more exposition of Christian doctrine in Justin’s first Apology, than in most of those contained in the other division. Tertullian’s *Liber Apologeticus* and his “Ad

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, Canon, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Neander, *Hist. Church*, vol. i. p. 242. Bohn’s Edition.

Nationes," the one only a slight adaptation of the other, appear in different classes; *a priori*, no doubt, we should have expected some such division as this; the official Apologies should have been simply pleas for toleration; the less formal Apologies should have taken a more extensive range; in fact no such distinction exists, and the division does not appear to be a good one.

There is one Apology, that of Origen against Celsus, which stands alone; it is the reply to a particular work, and answers specific objections to Christianity made by a person who had examined into its writings. All<sup>1</sup> the rest, however, may be divided into two classes, with real, though not great, distinctions; and with single characteristic prototypes. In the one class we place the Greek Apologists, with Justin Martyr as their representative; in the other, the Latin Apologists, and as their representative, Tertullian.

In this division, we have a distinction in *time*; a distinction in *language*; and, we shall endeavour to shew, a distinction in *character*.

The distinction in *time* can be easily stated: the Latin Apologists are the defenders of the church in the third, the Greek, in the second century. The distinction in time itself involved a distinction in character. Christianity was scarcely known to the authorities of the Roman Empire, and the distinction between it and Judaism was only just beginning to be

<sup>1</sup> It must be borne in mind that Justin's Dialogue with Trypho is never included in the general remarks.

acknowledged at the beginning of the second century. The fourth century was not many years old, when the Emperor himself was a Christian, and Christianity was in power. The chasm between insignificance and supreme power is very great, and was gradually bridged over throughout the intermediate period. Christianity was better known in the third than in the second century; and this makes one difference between the Latin and Greek Apologists.

There was also a difference of *language*; and it implied a difference of stand point. The Greek Apologists spoke as to Greeks; the Latin Apologists, though not Italians, but Africans, spoke as and to citizens of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> By the Greek Apologist the world is divided into two classes, Greeks and Barbarians; it is the Greek mythology which is exposed, the Greek philosophy which is refuted, the Greek writings which are compared with the Hebrew;—but when we get to the Latin Apologists,<sup>2</sup> the Romans everywhere appear as masters of the world; Roman history is appealed to, and Roman authors quoted.

Moreover there is a difference of profession in the writers;<sup>3</sup> the Greek Apologists are philosophers;<sup>4</sup> the Latin are lawyers or rhetoricians.

<sup>1</sup> i. Justin Apol. c. 7, 21. Tat. Orat. c. 29, 35. Athen. Apol. c. 14, 17, 18. Theoph. ad Autol. i. 9, 10; ii. 4, 5, 9; iii. 26, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 1, 5, 10, 25, 32, 36. Octavius, c. 7, 12, 25, 26. Cyp. de Van. Idol. c. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Greek Apologists—1. Justin. Cf. Dial. Trypho. c. 1, 2. 2. Tatian. Cf. Tat. Orat. c. 1, 2, 26, 27, 29. 3. Athenagoras. Cf. Athen. Apol.

Again, we find a difference in the charges against which the Latin and Greek Apologists had respectively to defend the Christians.

The charges of immorality appear in all the Greek Apologists, except Clement of Alexandria; but only in Tertullian and Minucius Felix of the Latin Apologists; and these two are the earliest in date. In the former, they appear as charges which were seriously believed in by the Heathen, but the language<sup>1</sup> of Tertullian leads us to imagine that in his time they had ceased to be regarded as true by the authorities; who, however, encouraged the common people to believe in them for political reasons.

In the Greek Apologists the political charges are very little insisted on. There was<sup>2</sup> some vague jealousy, arising from the known fact that the Christians looked for a kingdom, but this is all.

In the Latin Apologists, on the contrary, these charges hold the most prominent place. It was beginning to be felt that the Christians would never be satisfied till they had utterly overthrown the State religion; and their rapid increase of numbers shewed how formidable their power was becoming.

Title. 4. Clement of Alexandria. He was almost the founder of the Alexandrian school of Christian philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> Latin Apologists—1. Tertullian. Cf. De Pallio, c. 3: Eus. His. ii. 2. 2. Minucius Felix. Cf. Jerome de Vir. Ill. c. 58: Octavius, c. 2. 3. Cyprian. Cf. Jerome de Vir. Ill. c. 67. 4. Arnobius. Cf. Jerome de Vir. Ill. c. 79. 5. Lactantius. Cf. Jer. de Vir. Ill. c. 80.

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 2, 3. Cf. also Origen c. Celsum, vi. 40.

<sup>2</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 11.



The theological charges are also different. In the Greek Apologists the Christians are charged with Atheism; in the Latin, this charge is dropped; and they are accused of forsaking the religion of the gods, and of worshipping monstrous things.

But the greatest distinction lies in their views of Christianity, and has been thus <sup>1</sup>drawn:—"The Greek Apologists shew in what way Christianity was the satisfaction of all the deepest wants of humanity—the sum of all knowledge; it was reserved for the Latin Apologists to apprehend its independent claims, and establish its right to supplant, as well as to fulfil, what was partial and vague in earlier systems."

<sup>2</sup>And again,—“The permanent characteristics of the national literatures of Greece and Rome re-appear with powerful effect in patristic writings. On the one side there is universality, freedom, large sympathy, deep feeling; on the other, there is individuality, system, order, logic. The tendency of one mind is towards truth—of the other, towards law.”

We shall endeavour to give some illustration of the above by comparing the Apologies of Justin with those of Tertullian.

In Justin Martyr's view, Christianity does not stand alone; it is the full development of truths whose germs appeared ages ago. <sup>3</sup>He believes that if a man will but use his reason to examine into Christianity, he can-

<sup>1</sup> Westcott's Canon c. ii. p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> c. 2 p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> i Just. Apol. c. 2.

not fail of being convinced of the truth of its claims. Reason is God's gift to man, and by its light men have in all ages recognised the truth. <sup>1</sup>Everywhere men have made laws, and philosophized according to right and reason. The Word has dwelt in all generations. <sup>2</sup>Whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word. <sup>3</sup>He compares Socrates with Christ, by way of shewing the development, perfection, harmony, which was in the latter, but which was wanting in the former, because he did not know the whole of the Word. The Christians see clearly that which the philosophers saw only darkly. <sup>4</sup>The ethical system of the Stoics, and even in some respects that of the poets, was admirable; and this was owing to that Seminal Word which was implanted in the whole race of man. <sup>5</sup>It was the analogies between Christianity and the systems of philosophy which led Justin to pray and strive with all his might to become a Christian. He found a kindred spirit in Christianity and Platonism—the errors of the latter arose from the partial character of its grasp of the Seminal Word. One light, and one light only, had shone in the world; it had penetrated its darkest recesses; everywhere and at every time it had glimmered, it might be only faintly and fitfully, yet so that the truth could be recognized—if only in a distorted form. And now men had come to the bright-

<sup>1</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 7.

<sup>2</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 10.

<sup>3</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 10. <sup>4</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 8. <sup>5</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 13.

ness of the day ; or rather that light which had, as through a veil, guided and cheered them in the darkness, now flashed before them in full splendour, and they knew it to be the same which had led them these many years. Christianity is thus, according to Justin, a clear, harmonious, perfect philosophy ; the full development of all previous systems.

On the other hand, in Tertullian's idea, 'Christianity stands alone in the world ; he will have nothing to do with the writings of the Philosophers or Poets ; he has no assurance in regard to their truth ; human wisdom is likely to corrupt. He passes by the highly educated Philosophers, and prefers the testimony of the simple, rude, uncultured, untaught soul of the artisan. He asks,<sup>2</sup> "Is there any likeness between the Christian and the Philosopher? Between the disciple of Greece, and the disciple of Heaven? Between the man whose object is fame, and the man whose object is life? Between the talker, and the doer? Between the man who builds up, and the man who pulls down? Between the friend, and the foe, of error? Between one who corrupts the truth, and one who restores and teaches it? Between its thief, and its guardian?" It is the contrast which Christianity presents to all else in the

<sup>1</sup> De test. Animæ, c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. c. 46. It must be here mentioned that the translations used throughout this essay are for the most part derived from the Anti-Nicene Christian Library, published by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.

world, which, in his opinion, constitutes its claim to his acceptance. The Christians and Heathen are as far apart from one another, as light from darkness. There was a knowledge of God amongst the Jews of old ; there is a knowledge of God amongst the Christians now ; as for the rest, “darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.”

The order and systematic arrangement in Tertullian is infinitely superior to that in Justin Martyr. He has a more perfect comprehension of the arguments likely to tell. He does not appeal to the testimony of Scripture, but to arguments which the Heathen would acknowledge. He does not go too deeply into Christian doctrines, but only refers to those prominent ones with which the Heathen were generally acquainted. He starts his Apology with refuting accusations ; he is naturally led to shew what Christianity is, when he has shewn what it is not ; the Christians do not indeed serve the gods of the Heathen, but they have a God whom they serve. With a view to shewing that the Christian society has none of the vices of an illicit society, he gives a description of it. He contrasts strongly the merits of the Christians with their treatment. He never loses sight of his main object—toleration. Throughout we see not only the ‘Lawyer, but the Roman’s reverence for law.

On the other hand, Justin’s Apologies are deficient in system ; he is apt to go too deeply into matters

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially Apol. c. 4—6.

which a heathen was not likely to understand—as for instance, the prophecies of the Old Testament. He appeals to authorities which they would not allow, he does not cite them by name, and he quotes them in-exactly. He makes mistakes in matters of history. He does not exhaust one point of his defence and then leave it, but returns to it again after an interval of a few chapters.<sup>1</sup> There is a want of definiteness throughout ; he cannot decide on the exact relation of Christianity to Philosophy ; he gives at one time or another three reasons of a very different character for the similarities between them. He finds in these, proofs of the subtlety of the demons, gross plagiarism on the part of the philosophers, and indications of the working of the the Seminal Word.

We have taken Tertullian to represent the Latin Apologists ; Justin to represent the Greek ; and as their Apologies were not only the first in time, but the most complete in character, and, in some respects, the basis of the others, they are the best fitted for the purpose ; at the same time it must be allowed, that in none of the others is the difference between the views taken of Christianity by Latin and Greek Apologists so clearly defined. No Greek Apologist is so liberal in his view of heathenism and philosophy as Justin ; no Latin Apologist is so decided in his assertion of the independent claims of Christianity as Tertullian.

We now proceed to a more particular view. The

<sup>1</sup> These faults are very obvious in the Dialogue with Trypho.

Apologists had accusations to meet; this was their great object, but in so doing, they expose heathenism and philosophy; and they explain and establish Christianity more or less fully. Each Apology has a peculiar character of its own to be investigated; against all, objections more or less important have been urged. Under these divisions we shall examine into our subject; we shall then be able, having learnt the *character*, to give some estimate of the *value* of the Apologetic literature of the first three centuries.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE APOLOGETIC DEFENCE OF THE CHRISTIANS.

THE first thing the Apologists had to do was to refute the charges made against the Christians as a society ; strictly speaking, this was their only proper work ; and it may well be questioned, whether, their aim being toleration, they would not have been more likely to attain it by stopping here. The heathen authorities would not be more inclined to tolerate a sect, which, whilst begging for its life, exposed and ridiculed other religious systems, and claimed for itself the exclusive possession of truth.

The charges brought against the Christians were of three kinds—Moral, Theological, and Political. Each served its purpose : the first two kindled the popular hatred ; the last furnished a legal pretext for persecution.

The first, and, in the beginning of the Apologetic period, the most prominent charge, was that of Immorality. The Christians were accused of the most abominable practices in their secret meetings. These, according to the heathen, were scenes of murder, incest,

and unrestrained lust. <sup>1</sup>Particulars are given by many of the Apologists, and if they could have been substantiated in the slightest degree, the most cruel persecutions would have had some justification. No charge ever brought against a society more completely failed. The heathen had the best opportunities for substantiating, exaggerating, or inventing a case. A society bound together by common crimes cannot stand the test of constant persecution ; the bond is sensual gratification, or unjust advantage ; and the very same motives induce a man to betray his accomplices when he is personally in danger of punishment ;—to save himself he becomes a traitor to them. If, then, the Christians formed a criminal society, how can we account for the fact, that during more than 200 years no well-attested case was ever substantiated against them? During that time many Christians, weak from sex, age, or position, were tortured to obtain evidence.<sup>2</sup> All the powers of the law were exerted against them. Their assemblies were surprised ; their slaves were tortured ; but we never hear of the charge been proved ; if it had, a report of it would have been carefully circulated by the government, and a record would have come down to our time. Then, again, according to Lucian,<sup>3</sup> the Christians were

<sup>1</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 12. Octavius c. 9. Tert. Apol. c. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Justin (ii Apol. c. 12,) mentions the case of some female slaves who were forced by torture to admit the truth of these charges ; Pliny however was not successful.

<sup>3</sup> De Morte Peregrini. It is remarkable that Peregrinus himself, unscrupulous as he was, seems to have made no charge against the Christians when he was turned out of their body.

simple credulous fellows ; how easy then would it have been for a spy to have ingratiated himself with them, joined their society, been present at their meetings, and when he had gathered sufficient evidence for his purpose, have watched his opportunity, and betrayed them, redhanded. The fact is, as Tertullian<sup>1</sup> says, rumour was their sole witness ; a witness used only in default of a better ; which may indeed precede positive evidence, but which has no value in itself ; uncertain at the best, when proof is given, it ceases to exist.

Not only was the charge untrue, but the heathen authorities themselves did not believe it ; this, <sup>2</sup>their mode of procedure against the Christians sufficiently proves. If charges so revolting could have been established, there would have been no occasion to proceed against them on theological or political grounds. They would have been searched for like common robbers, and would have been treated as such ; no mercy would have been shewn them, and no place of repentance given them ; nor would confession, much less denial, have stayed the proceedings against them ; they would have been tortured to compel them to reveal the names of their accomplices, and the circumstances of their crime. Quite different was the plan pursued. <sup>3</sup>They were not to be sought for, but if brought and accused before the judges, they were to be punished. <sup>4</sup>They were not charged with the crimes of murder and

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Trajan's Letter to Pliny.

<sup>4</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 1.

incest, but simply with being Christians. If they did but plead, "not guilty," there was an end to the trial; their word was taken. If they confessed, "I am a Christian," then the torture was applied; not however to compel them to betray their companions, but to force them to recant. "To others," Tertullian<sup>1</sup> says, "you apply the torture to make them confess; to the Christians only to make them deny." What can more distinctly prove, that in the opinion of the authorities, there was not the slightest pretence for these charges of immorality? The object of the mode of procedure was evidently not to punish the Christians, but to exterminate Christianity; this, they considered would be effected by a denial on the part of the prisoner that he was a Christian. What malefactor was ever treated in such a way?

But perhaps the prevalence of the charge needs accounting for, and reasons may easily be found. <sup>2</sup>In an immoral age the external conduct of the Christians was scrupulously moral. There could be no divorce of Christianity and morality in those days. The only body of men who made a profession of morality were the Christians. <sup>3</sup>They had, however, no public meetings, but met together in secret and nocturnal assemblies. It is a distinguishing characteristic of immorality, and of an immoral age, to disbelieve in the existence of purity. As it knows itself to be, so it judges all others

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 3, 44, 45.

<sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 10.

are. In its opinion, outward self-restraint is only a disguise for secret sensuality. Hence, the lovefeasts were distorted into licentious orgies. To feed on the body and blood of Christ,—to murder and devour an infant. Virtue is ever hated by vice, and there were special reasons why the Christians should be hated by the heathen. What more natural than that they should give a ready credence to reports that the external purity, so reproachful to their own undisguised licentiousness, was but a cloak for secret orgies, at which even they were shocked.

Other reasons have also been given. Gibbon suggests, that Tacitus confounded the Christians under the name of Galileans with the zealots of the same name; and a mistake, of which an educated man like Tacitus was capable, would be very possible to the ignorant multitude. Some explanation is certainly needed for the fact, that the Christians, who might with far more justice have been accused of apathy, were charged by a reliable historian with belonging to a “*malefica superstitio* ;” and of being “*per flagitia invisos*.” Others, again, suppose that some foundation for the charges was found in the undoubted immorality of the heretics ;<sup>1</sup> and this may have been the case. Celsus shews how little the men of his time were able to distinguish between Catholic and Heretic.

No doubt many were ignorant of the true character of the Christians,<sup>2</sup> and took for granted the truth of the

1 i. Just. Apol. c. 26.

2 Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 4.

charges commonly made, without further inquiry ; the Apologies were written to claim investigation, and to give information ; and they seem not to have been without effect. These charges are referred to in every Apologetic writing, with <sup>1</sup>two exceptions, (which the character of the treatises sufficiently explains,) until the time of Cyprian ; in his and the succeeding Apologies, (those of Lactantius and Arnobius,) they are lacking. It seems probable, therefore, that by that time they had found to be untenable, and had been withdrawn.

The Apologists not only shewed that the Christians were not immoral, but that their morality was a direct consequence of their Christianity. <sup>2</sup>They appealed to the precepts of Christ, and asked how it was possible that men, whose religion consisted in keeping these, could be guilty of such monstrous crimes. Lactantius<sup>3</sup> says, "*Nostro autem populo quid horum objici potest, cujus omnis religio est, sine scelere ac sine maculâ vivere?*" Not contented with proving themselves to be moral, <sup>4</sup>they retorted the charges of immorality against the heathen ; they asserted that of every one of the charges brought against them, instances could be found in the history of the gods, or the lives of their worshippers.

<sup>1</sup> The Hortatory Address to the Greeks, ascribed to Justin ; and the Exhortation to the Heathen of Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>2</sup> i. Just. Apol. 14—17. Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 9—15.

<sup>3</sup> Div. Inst. v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> ii. Just. Apol. c. 12. Tert. Apol. c. 9. Lact. Div. Inst. v. 10.



The charges, though false, served a purpose ; they fanned the popular hatred, and they deprived Christians of much of the influence which their outward moral conduct was calculated to give them. The ignorant common people believed them, and dragged the Christians before the tribunals ; but when brought there, they were tried on other grounds. Perhaps without this wave of popular feeling, persecution would have been impossible ; public opinion would not have borne to see the purist and most harmless citizens of the commonwealth tortured and slain ; but these charges made the Christians appear the basest of hypocrites, and enemies of mankind ; and one and all exulted in dragging to their doom men,—the heinousness of whose crimes was startling even in an age of crime.

We now pass on to the second charge, “the Theological,” viz., that the Christians were atheists, impious, worshippers of monstrous things. This charge could only be denied by the Apologists as utterly false, but its origin has to be explained.

The charge of atheism and impiety rests on this fact, that the Christians did not worship the gods of the heathen and had no visible object of worship of their own. They used no images. The Apologists not only assert this,<sup>1</sup> but give the reason. The religion of the heathen of those days<sup>2</sup> had no connection with morality or with the acts and life of a man ; it was made up

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 3 ; v. 19.

simply of rites and ceremonies ; sacrifices to the gods, and public solemnities.<sup>1</sup> With these the Christian would have nothing to do ; he was never seen reverencing any of the statues of the gods, which met him at every turn ; and his place was vacant at the public festivals. He never performed any public religious acts of worship ; his whole life shewed that he despised and loathed the heathen religion. Celsus says, <sup>2</sup> “ The Christians cannot so much as endure the sight of the temples, altars, and statues.” It was natural enough, then, that the heathen, with his religion of external forms, would imagine those to have no religion who had no public religious rites ; his education would incapacitate him from conceiving a spiritual religion ; and the argument was valid to him,—the Christians have no temples therefore they have no gods.<sup>3</sup> The charge, that the Christians worshipped monstrous things, was a mere invention, springing out of the intense hatred felt towards them. In some respects it was an advance on the charge of atheism ; it was, by this time, known that the Christians had some object of adoration, but their worship being secret,<sup>4</sup> it was concluded to be of a shameful character.

It might be supposed that the charge of atheism, even if true, made as it was in an atheistical age, would not

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 12. Tert. Apol. c. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Origen, c. Celsum. vii. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 9. Tert. Apol. c. 16. Tert. ad Nationes, i. 11, 12, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Octavius, c. 10.

have given the Christians much trouble.<sup>1</sup> The atheism of philosophers and educated men was notorious, and was tolerated ; but a great distinction must be made between them and the Christians. The former were theoretical, but not, like the latter, practical unbelievers in the State religion. The philosopher had no objection, for the sake of peace, and in order to maintain his popularity, to observe the rites of religion ; there was no principle involved ;<sup>2</sup> the rites were unmeaning, for the gods were non-existent ;<sup>3</sup> a State religion was useful to control the masses, he owed no allegiance elsewhere. But it was far otherwise with the Christian, for heathenism was a deep reality to him. It was a system of devil worship ; to participate in it was to be<sup>4</sup> invested with the badge of slavery to the demons whose master he claimed to be ; to worship them was an act of rebellion against the master he served, to whom reverence was due both in inward thought and outward word and act. There was one God, and there was none other but He ; and Him only would he worship and serve.<sup>5</sup> The heathen of the day could not see the force of this reasoning ; they could not see why the Christians should not perform the outward acts of religion to gods they did not believe in. It was only amongst the Christians that consistency of conduct and opinion were to be found.

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 5, 8. Tert. ad. Nationes, i. 10. Lact. Div. Inst. iii. 30. ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 3. <sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 8. <sup>4</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 23, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, viii. 21. Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 2. Octavius, c. 6.

The Christians, then, were open and practical despisers of the gods of the State; they thus excited the popular anger, which made itself felt at certain seasons. The life of heathenism in those days was fitful; it kept its hold on the masses rather by a superstitious fear that it might be true, than by a firm belief that it was.<sup>1</sup> In times of peace and prosperity any diseased animal was good enough for a sacrifice, and the heathen were guilty of sacrilege to the gods which they professed to adore; but in times of calamity it was different; then the people flocked to the temples, and none dared absent themselves. It was a time of trouble—calamity was succeeding calamity. There were pestilences, famines, and earthquakes. The prosperity of the empire visibly declined.<sup>2</sup> Both Christian and heathen saw something supernatural in the course of events. The Christian saw the anger of God at the crimes of the world and the persecution of his followers.<sup>3</sup> The heathen saw the anger of the gods on account of their neglected rites, and the increase of the Christians. In consequence, they had public sacrifices to avert their anger, and these the Christians would not attend. Maddened with fear, and conscious of their own short-comings, the heathen made scape-goats of those they deemed more guilty than themselves. There were popular risings,<sup>4</sup> there was a cry of “Away with the atheists! Away with the Christians to the lions.” All forms of law

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 13, 14, 15.    <sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 40.    Cyp. ad Demet.

<sup>3</sup> Arn. adv. gent. i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 40.

were set at nought, and this to such an extent, that Hadrian and Antoninus Pius issued decrees to insist on legal forms being used in the trial of the Christians.<sup>1</sup> The chief point that we wish to draw attention to here is, that it was the charge of impiety, not of immorality, which excited the popular fury on occasions like these.

The third charge, and in some respects the charge of the most importance, was Political. The Christians formed a society not recognized by the law; they belonged to an illicit and novel religion.

The jealousy of the Roman authorities against secret societies was extraordinary. Trajan issued a law against close associations, called *Hetariæ*; and even forbade the formation of a company of firemen at Alexandria. There was necessarily much secrecy about the Christians. The persecutions prevented the public performance of their religious rites. There was much about them to excite suspicion. <sup>2</sup>They were a body of men, of all nations, growing and spreading every day; united by some close tie for some unknown purpose; a purpose plainly of the greatest importance, for everything considered of importance by others was neglected by them. <sup>3</sup>They refused the world's honours, and despised the world's pleasures. Vague reports, too, of a kingdom which these men were setting up would be continually

<sup>1</sup>Tert. Apol. c. 41. Tat. Orat. c. 4. Arn. adv. gent. i. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Octavius, c. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Tert. Apol. c. 38, 42. i. Just. Apol. c. 11. Theoph. ad. Autol. iii. 15.



floating about, and the idea of a spiritual kingdom would never be conceived by a Roman governor. Every now and then glimpses of their aims would be seen; and these were nothing more or less than the subversion of the State religion.

The Christians, then, belonged to a secret society, and one apparently of a dangerous character. But this was not all. Christianity was a *religio illicita*,—a *religio nova*, with none of those qualities which inclined the Romans to toleration. <sup>1</sup> Those were the national religions which the Roman authorities permitted to exist, and the limits of their existence were strictly defined. The nations and the religions were supposed to be fitted to each other, and proselytism was strictly forbidden. But Christianity in its very essence was proselytizing. It was not national; its votaries were of all nations. It was, moreover, intolerant; it would have no intercourse with other religions. The Christian would not even be present at any of the heathen ceremonies; <sup>2</sup> he scrupulously objected to everything connected with them.

The legal form of this charge is briefly given by Tertullian in the words—“*Non licet esse vos.*” <sup>3</sup> It is characteristic of the law-loving lawyer and the law-observing early Christian, that he gives reasons to excuse the Christians for their existence contrary to law. He argues that justice is the foundation of law. That law

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 1. Orig. c. Cels., v. 25, 33, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. de Idolatriâ. Tert. de Coronâ.

<sup>3</sup> Apol. c. 4, 5.



is fallible because human. That the law, if a bad one, should be repealed. That a state of things should not be considered just, because according to law ; but according to law, because just. He shews that laws have been changed, and are changed, and require to be changed ; then why not this, if reason be shewn ? This he proceeds to do. <sup>1</sup> He argues, that the suppression by the law of certain societies is based on a prudential regard to public order,—that the State may not be divided into factions, which might come into violent collision either in the assemblies, or in the pursuit of gain. He asserts that this reason does not hold good against the Christians, for nothing is more foreign to them than affairs of State, and with the public festivals they have nothing to do. In fact, the basis of his argument is the harmlessness of the Christians, to be seen both in their sacred rites, and the purity of their lives ; and he claims toleration for such quiet citizens. It cannot, however, be denied, that, *primâ facie*, the Roman authorities had good reasons for refusing to tolerate Christianity. Connected as the heathen religion was with the State, they would have every reason to guard against the attacks of men who were endeavouring to subvert the one, which, in its fall, might bring down the other. <sup>2</sup>

Another political charge against the Christians was, that they were disloyal to the Emperor. They would

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 38, 39, 40, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 28, 36. Theoph. ad Autol., i., 11.

not reverence him as divine, they would not swear by his genius, and they would not celebrate his festal days, as others did. To this, the answer is, that the Christians, while willing to pay all *human* honours to the Emperor, cannot pay to him *divine*; one only can they worship,—the God of heaven and earth; all other majesty is inferior to His.<sup>1</sup> But for the Emperor they pray; him they serve and honour; by his safety they swear, though not by his genius. His festal days they celebrate, but with chastity, sobriety, and virtue. Deeds are of the most importance.<sup>2</sup> Amongst those who joined in the festivities in his honour many traitors are to be found; many of them consult astrologers about his life; but there are none such amongst the Christians. They cannot be hostile to the Emperor, for their religion prevents them, seeing that by it they are forbidden to wish, do, speak, or think ill of any man.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding all their wrongs, they never take the law into their own hands; notwithstanding their great numbers, they do not present even a passive resistance to their enemies; but on the contrary, do them all the good they can.

Another political charge against the Christians, and one which appears to have foundation in fact, was, that the Christians were unprofitable citizens.

Nothing could appear more remarkable to us, in these days of engrossing worldly pursuits and pleasures, than the all-absorbing character of Christianity in the

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 32.    <sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 35.    <sup>3</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 37.

early ages. The Christian's work and pleasure were all one; it was to win souls to Christ, and to help the brethren in Christ. He had a vivid realization of the unseen world, and all the honours and pleasures of this world were as nothing in his eyes.<sup>1</sup> There were only two epochs in the world's history on which he could fix his attention; two directions in which he could turn his eyes. He looked backwards on the life of Christ; the cloud had but just received Him out of his sight; he was still gazing up to heaven; the western sky was still bright with the rays of the sun so lately set. He turned eastward, and looked forwards: there he saw the sky lighted up by the reflected rays from the opposite horizon, and he mistook it for the first tokens of the coming dawn. Where else should he look? Why should he take delight in the earth, so soon to be devoured by the flames, when all that dwelt in it were as bloodhounds baying for his life? There were for him no earth-lights, or, if there were, they were visible reflections of heaven's brightness. With us the case is very different. West and East are equally dark. The West has long since lost its brightness, and there is darkness, from hope deferred, in the East. Earth-lights are very bright, and long and difficult is the task to trace them to their heavenly source. The light of Christianity is more widely diffused, but it has lost much of its original brightness. A glory rested on the head of each early Christian; they shone as lights in

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 36.

darkness that might be felt. Now, earth-lights pale the brightness of heaven's beams.

But even this singleness of aim could degenerate into a fault. The Christians, though not *of*, were *in* the world. They had their secular, as well as religious, duties in it; and these they were apt to neglect. Citizens of Heaven, they forgot their earthly citizenship. This spirit seems to have been displayed by the <sup>1</sup>Thessalonian Christians, who, in their feverish expectation of the Second Advent, forgot their duty in the world; and it was also prevalent in the early Church. The charge, however, is not referred to in any of the Greek Apologists; but from Tertullian downwards, every writer mentions it. <sup>2</sup>Tertullian denies its truth. He says, "How in all the world can that be the case with people who are living among you, eating the same food, wearing the same attire, having the same habits, under the same necessities of existence." "We sojourn with you in the world, abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor booth, nor workshop, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other place of commerce. We sail with you, and serve in your armies, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in your traffickings; even in the various arts we make public property of our works, for your benefit." The Christians did not join in the heathen religious ceremonies, nor purchase the things connected with them;

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 11.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. c. 42.

but they, too, had their own costly religious rites. They did not spend money on the gods, but they spent much in charity, and they defrauded none of their due. Those who pandered to the luxuries, and vices, and superstitions of the age, had cause to complain of the Christians; but surely <sup>1</sup>“it was a noble fruit of the Christians that they had no fruits for such as these.” Add to all this, that they were a set of men from whom the Government had nothing to fear; amongst whom there was no criminal; that none of them were found in the prison, or in the mines, except for this cause only, that they were Christians; that they alone carried out morality to the full; <sup>2</sup>restraining themselves in words and looks, as well as deeds,—and Tertullian claims that he has answered the charge brought against them.

If we could accept as true, or, at any rate, as complete, the description Tertullian gives of his fellow Christians, we should confess that here, as elsewhere, the heathen could only find a mere pretext for persecuting them. It is true that nothing is said here of political duties, or of active endeavours for the good of the State; and passive obedience, and moral conduct, and living as others live, are not sufficient to make good citizens; but the times were troublous, it was safer to abstain from politics; there was much that was dangerous,—little to attract a Christian, in the honours of the State. But we cannot accept this state-

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. c. 45.



ment. <sup>1</sup>Tertullian elsewhere contradicts himself.

If we were to regard the Christians as the men of the world must have regarded them, without attaching any weight to their principles, or making any allowances for the perplexities and difficulties of the position they were in, we should at once acknowledge that the heathen had abundant reason to accuse them of being unprofitable citizens; and, even if we attach due weight to their principles and difficulties, we cannot but confess that the Christians gave far too great a handle to their enemies. They were a set of men who abstained from all the public games; who paid nothing to the support of the temple worship, so profitable to the State; who brought no custom to those, so many in number, <sup>2</sup>who gained their living by the amphitheatre, the theatre, the circus, the temple, and the manufacture of gods.

Up to this point we feel that the Christians had no choice but to act as they did. Their principles demanded that they should utterly abstain from things like these. But they went further, and raised objections against lawful trades, or, at any rate, used arguments which would prevent any vigorous and successful prosecution of them. Tertullian says, <sup>3</sup>“We have in this world no concern but to depart out of it as quickly as we may.” With such feelings the Christians could not be good citizens. <sup>4</sup>Lactantius denies that

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 41. De Idol. c. 19. De Coron. c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Blunt's iii. Centuries, pp. 144, 145.

<sup>3</sup> Apol. c. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Div. Inst. v. 17.



it is possible that any Christian would voluntarily engage in any pursuit of gain. Why, he says, should the really just man make a voyage ; or, what should he seek from a foreign country to whom that which is his own suffices ? Such an argument implies the unlawfulness of all trade for the sake of gain.

With principles like these, there would be few busy thriving merchants amongst them, ministering either to the luxuries, or even the wants of the nation. For another reason, too, commerce was almost closed to them, for they could not protect themselves when cheated. The forms of the law-courts were idolatrous, so that they could not be used with a clear conscience ; and it was doubtful whether, under any circumstances, law-suits were to be permitted. <sup>1</sup> "It does not become," says Tertullian, "the son of peace to sue at law." <sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Christians took no part in politics. They despised and refused all temporal honours and ensigns of magistracy. There were amongst them none who took a prominent part in the State. <sup>3</sup> Their men of rank were accused of apathy, and sneered at as spiritless. No good to the State ever came of the Nazarene.

Lastly, and this must have aroused the fury and jealousy of the Roman government to its highest pitch, the Christians had all sorts of scruples connected with the lawfulness of the profession of arms. <sup>4</sup> Tertullian

<sup>1</sup> De Coronâ, c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 38.

<sup>3</sup> So Flavius Clemens. Cf. Suetonius, c. 15.

<sup>4</sup> De Idol. c. 19.

says, "there is no agreement between the divine and human sacrament; the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil; the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to two lords, God and Cæsar." 'If a man, already a soldier, be converted to the faith, he can see no alternative for him but to quit the service, or suffer for God's sake.

Tertullian does not stand alone in his opinions on this matter; they are shared in by his disciple Cyprian, and by other Christians of a very different school of thought.<sup>2</sup> Origen says, "We war not with the Emperor though he constrain us." Lactantius also was opposed to all war; and there are traces of the same opinion in Fathers of later times.<sup>3</sup> The abstract question of the lawfulness of war was indeed complicated by the duties which soldiers had then to perform, viz., to keep guard over heathen temples, and to take meals in them; to protect the heathen deities, and to carry idolatrous flags and badges; to take idolatrous oaths, and to join in idolatrous ceremonies; but the question is decided by Tertullian, at least, on abstract principles.<sup>4</sup> "The Lord had taken away the sword; in disarming Peter he unbelted every soldier." It is impossible to conceive a course of conduct better adapted to enrage the Roman

<sup>1</sup> De Coron. c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cyp. Ep. 57, 2. Orig. c. Cels. viii. 73. Div. Inst. v. 17. vi. 20. Tat. Orat. c. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Tert. de Idol. c. 19. De Coron. c. 11. 12.

<sup>4</sup> De Idol, c. 19.

government than this. Could it be tolerated that this useless, insignificant, but numerous body of men,—these <sup>1</sup> wretches of an abandoned, interdicted, and desperate society,” should refuse to serve in the military ranks? should be continually objecting to certain parts of their duties? Was the Imperial power to be thus braved? Men had cause to ask, What would become of the State if all were Christians; if there were none to take the public offices; to provide for the public necessities, to fight against the public foe? They might well determine, as far as possible, to put a stop to the advance of a superstition whose votaries were a dead weight on the State; who added nothing to its power; and who bore none of its burdens. Of little value to the Christians, under the circumstances, would be their freedom from crime, and their quiet obedience to rule; all would be put down to that fanaticism which led them to despise all the things of the world, and to view its pleasures and pains with the same indifference, and to persist in their course of conduct with inflexible obstinacy. <sup>2</sup> It is not sufficient to say, that only a small portion of the Christian body was thus useless in the affairs of the world; in the rise of a new party, the eccentricities or violent statements of a few extreme members are invariably placed to the credit of the whole; and in this case, the heathen and social systems were so entwined together, that no

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Clem. Alex. Cohort. c. 10.

Christian could join in many of the pursuits of the day ; and as in those which were open to him, conscientious difficulties were always in his path,—as he was for ever liable to find some religious ceremonies connected with his calling,—as he was always in danger of being cheated, without hope of redress, by his heathen customers,—as he would constantly feel that his life was in his hand,—he would, if he did not wish to court martyrdom, take refuge in obscurity. He really despised the riches which were so dangerous for him to get ; he cared nothing for the world, in which it was death for him to mix ; and this being his practical position, he would naturally proceed to justify his conduct in theory ; and he would readily find arguments in the Bible which would satisfy him that the course of life which was to him the safest, was also the wisest—nay more, enjoined on him by God. It is almost impossible to decide how far the Christians were justified in their conduct. What we wish to insist upon is, that, first, supposing them only to have abstained from duties and offices connected with idolatry, there would have been some reason for this charge made against them in the eyes of the Roman government ; and that, secondly, we have clear indications that many went beyond this, and neglected their duties as men in the world, and citizens of the State.

We have now investigated all the principal charges against the Christians of early times. In answering them, we have, to a considerable extent, described what

the Christians were. The most remarkable points in their character were,—their morality; their fortitude under persecution; their love to one another and to mankind; their indifference to worldly things; and their thorough conviction of the reality of the things of the unseen world. All these flowed from their enthusiastic belief in their religion.

It was not to be expected that <sup>1</sup> those around them should be able to sympathize with them in their course of life; they saw only the outside of the Christians' character;—the inward principles which formed it were beyond their power to comprehend. The heathen lived only for this world—the Christians lived as aliens in it:—"If in this life only we have hope in Christ," said <sup>2</sup> St. Paul, "we are of all men the most miserable." The heathen knew nothing of this hope, and <sup>3</sup> judged them to be the most miserable of men; and (incredible fact!) miserable of their own choice; it was impossible to understand such intense folly.

Some, perhaps, may think, that if the Christians had been so pure, so forbearing, and so loving as we have pictured them, they would have attracted all men unto them by the beauty of their character. In practice, however, it is not generally found that an immoral man is attracted to another by finding in him that which is wanting in himself; it is far oftener true that <sup>4</sup> "he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the heathen in Octavius, Celsus, and Lucian.

<sup>2</sup> i. Cor. xv. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 12.

<sup>4</sup> S. John iii. 20.

lest his deeds should be reproved." Moreover, men are apt to form an opinion of men's motives, as well as of their actions, and it makes little matter how great the intrinsic merit of the latter may be, if the former are not such as meet with their approval. For instance, very few in the present day would find any reason in the zeal, energy, and piety of those belonging to a religion different from their own, strong enough to induce them to attach themselves to it; they would easily overcome the evidence of facts by finding motives for these virtues, they would fix on some principles of action, which they considered false, and trace back the virtues to it. It was so with the heathen in the first three centuries—they wished to account for the Christian mode of life; and they attributed it to senseless enthusiasm. The Christians somehow, they did not inquire how, had got attached to a superstition which promised them immortality,—hence their course of life; and, concluding that their virtues were the result of fanaticism, the Romans did not reverence them for the one, but they despised them for the other. Besides this, it is invariably the case, that when a body of men runs counter to the age, sets itself against its spirit, and denounces vehemently its sins, especially when they are for the most part illiterate men, or, at least, men of no reputation, little importance is attached to the virtues they may possess, whilst the greatest contempt is felt for them on account

<sup>1</sup> Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. Lucian de Morte Peregrini. Octavius, c. 11.



of their opposition to public opinion. A course of life founded on unintelligible principles, which therefore appears inconsistent, no one knowing in what direction it will flow, because ignorant from what impulse it springs,—which is at once passive and obstinate,—which is ever causing unexpected inconvenience from its firm adherence to its principles, and which cannot be betrayed into hasty acts of resentment when wronged, and so furnish excuses for inflicting punishment (never inflicted with pleasure on passive and uncomplaining victims),—this is a course more likely than any other to excite the bitterest hatred and contempt;—hatred the more bitter because it produces inconvenient results; contempt the more bitter because its principles are not understood. Such was the course of life of the Christians, as it appeared to the heathen,—and such were the results it produced.

It may, however, be objected to this exalted estimate of the Christian character, that the Apologists were enthusiasts, and gave an untrue account of their fellow Christians; but the reply to this is, that all the prominent features of the Christian character may be ascertained from heathen sources. Examine, for instance, the State paper written by the younger Pliny. The “Christian” question comes before him in his administration of his province. He examines it as a politician and as a philosopher. He has no religious enthusiasm to bias him, and no preconceived opinions to get rid of; therefore, any conclusion at which he

arrives is worthy of respect. He employs all the means in his power to obtain information concerning the character of the Christians and of Christianity. Secret information brings him into communication with a number of apostate Christians. Now, it is an historical fact, that perverts are the most unscrupulous of witnesses against the Church which they have forsaken. All the information, however, that could be elicited from these was, that the Christian society, every time it met, was wont to bind itself by a solemn oath never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up. He puts two female slaves to the torture;—surely there were none of their sex and position, without the strength that virtue gives, who would not have bought freedom from pain by denouncing their associates. It is a notorious fact, as he allows, that none who are really Christians can be forced into invoking the gods, worshipping the statue of the Emperor, or reviling the name of Christ. The only charge he makes against Christianity is, that it is an absurd and excessive superstition;—and absurd, excessive, and superstitious it naturally was to the sceptical Roman statesman.

Passing by the testimonies of Marcus Aurelius and Porphyry, let us next examine Lucian's account of the Christians;—the scoffer at all religions, the licentious wit, was not a man capable of appreciating the beauties of the Christian character. He looks down, or thinks

he looks down, upon the Christians, just as a man who has worn out his passions, and who is heartlessly vicious, would gaze upon the generous impulses of a child. His opinion of the Christians is found in a <sup>1</sup> letter to Cronius concerning the death of Peregrinus, and we shall quote the passage in full, because it gives the main features of the Christian character as drawn by a heathen. The picture agrees exactly with that drawn by the Apologists, and confirms their truth in a remarkable degree. "Peregrinus was a person who rambled from place to place, and from one sect of philosophy to another. Having been guilty of parricide and other crimes, he was obliged for a while to leave his native country and travel abroad, at which time he learned the wonderful doctrine of the Christians, by conversing with their priests and scribes near Palestine; and, in a short time, he shewed they were but children to him, for he was a prophet, high-priest, ruler of a synagogue, uniting all offices in himself alone. Some books he interpreted and explained, others he wrote; and they spake of him as a god, and took him for a law-giver, and honoured him with the title of master. They, therefore, still worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine, because he introduced into the world this new religion. For this reason, Proteus was taken up and put into prison; which very thing was of no small service to him afterwards, for giving reputation to his impostures, and gratifying his vanity. The

<sup>1</sup> Lardner's *Heathen Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 356.

Christians were much grieved at his imprisonment, and tried all ways to procure his liberty. Not being able to effect that, they did him all sorts of kind offices, and that, not in a careless manner, but with the greatest assiduity ; for, even betimes in the morning, there would be at the prison old women, some widows, and also little children ; and some of the chief of their men, by corrupting the keepers, would get into prison, and stay the whole night there with him : there they had a good supper together, and their sacred discourses. And this excellent Peregrinus (for so he was still called) was thought by them to be an extraordinary person, no less than another Socrates ; even from the cities of Asia some Christians came to him by an order of the body, to relieve, encourage, and comfort him. For it is incredible what expedition they use when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word, they spare nothing upon such an occasion ; and Peregrinus' chain brought him in a good sum of money from them ; for these miserable men have no doubt but they shall be immortal, and live for ever ; therefore, they contemn death, and many surrender themselves to sufferings. Moreover, their first law-giver has taught them that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worship that Master of theirs who was crucified, and engage to live according to his laws. They have also a sovereign contempt for all the things of this world, and look upon them as common, and trust one another with them

without any security ; for which reason, any subtle fellow, by good argument, may impose upon this simple people, and grow rich among them." Afterwards, when Peregrinus went abroad again, "he was well supplied by the Christians with all travelling charges, by whom also he was accompanied, and he lived in great plenty. Thus it went with him for some while. At length they parted, he having given them also some offence by eating, as I suppose, some things not allowed of them."

If anyone wishes to have an exalted opinion of the early Christians, he need not read the accounts written by men of their own body, he will find an opponent their best Apologist.

In one further particular, we shall use the testimony of a heathen. 'Celsus made it a charge against the Christians that their converts were made from the worst of characters ; he thus furnished the one link which was wanting in the chain of evidence to shew the transforming effects of Christianity in the early ages.

It might have been said, "We grant that the Christians were the moral men they have been pictured to be ; but this was not a consequence of their Christianity ; a common love for virtue bound together all those who practised morality in those days ; they became Christians because they loved virtue, they did not become virtuous because they were Christians."

1 Orig. c. Cels. i. 62, 63 ; iii. 64, 73, 74 ; vi. 27.

This, on the testimony of Celsus, we can assert, was not the case. Those were sick ones, who came to Christ, and were healed ; and, being made whole, sinned no more.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE APOLOGETIC ATTACK ON HEATHENISM AND PHILOSOPHY.

WE proceed now to discuss that which forms a prominent part of every Apology, which viewed as an argument, is successful; but which viewed politically, must have been highly injurious to the interests of the Christians, viz., the attack of the Apologists on the Heathen and Philosophical systems.

With regard to the former, the battle was half won before it was begun.<sup>1</sup> The resistance was but feeble at the best, and there was a division in the enemy's camp. The old heathen mythology had lost its power over the world; men, or at any rate, men of cultivated minds, had ceased to deify brute strength and strong passion. The world had grown up and was putting away the gods of its childhood.<sup>2</sup> Philosophers of the most contrary schools had united in destroying the historical character of the legends respecting the gods.<sup>3</sup> Some

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst., ii., 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 21. Tert. ad. Nationes, ii. 1. Arnob. adv. gentes, bk. v. Athen. Apol. c. 22. Octavius, c. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 6.

had asserted that they were not to be made the subjects of public disputation, lest such a discussion should end in overthrowing religion altogether.<sup>1</sup> Reason was on one side, antiquity and custom on the other; it was necessary that one should be given up.

These sceptical opinions shewed themselves in deeds.<sup>2</sup> Writers made the gods the subject of scorn, and vilified them in plays. The temples were chiefly valuable as a source of gain to the State. The images were insulted and sold; and any lame, diseased, useless animal was deemed good enough for sacrifice.

Viewed as a religion for the educated, Paganism was dead; but it was not so, viewed as a political system.<sup>3</sup> From this point of view, it was as flourishing as the State. The union between Church (to degrade a term) and State, was thoroughly complete in those days; they twain were one flesh. The highest civil, was the highest priestly power. <sup>4</sup>Religion was entwined with every act of business. The holidays of the people were the festival of the gods. To attack Heathenism was therefore nothing less than to attempt a revolution; and this, educated and uneducated, believer and unbeliever, alike would combine to resist. Thus, the task which the Apologists essayed was difficult and dangerous, for they had to oppose strong passions and powerful interests, though not weighty arguments.

Many and various are the arguments used by the

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst., ii. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 13, 14, 15. <sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 6. <sup>4</sup> Tert. de Idolatriâ.

Christians in their attack against Paganism. Some attack Paganism, generally; others, the Roman and Greek types of it, in particular.

To begin with the former: the Apologists, first of all, object against Heathenism that it is a system of polytheism. <sup>1</sup> They argue the absurdity of supposing that there can be more than one God, existing from everlasting; to suppose that there were two is to circumscribe the power of each. There is only room for one God in the universe, as there is only room for one general in an army, and one master in a house. Division of power implies variance of will, or insufficiency of strength. If, again, we suppose only one first principle, from whom all the other gods derived their origin, then these later gods must be subject to the original god, and subjection destroys divinity. He who made all things can have no need of any to help Him to govern all things. Thus the heathen polytheism is based on low notions of divinity, and the Christian monotheism is fundamentally connected with an Almighty power.

Secondly, it is a worship of things earthly and material. To pass by the grosser form, <sup>2</sup> the worship of images, and to assume that these images were only representations of the divinities, and not the divinities themselves,

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 8. Arn. adv. gentes, i. 28. Lact. Div. Inst., i. 3. Octavius, c. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Theoph. ad Autol., i. 10, ii. 2. Lact. Div. Inst., ii. 2, ii. 4. Ep. ad. Diognetum, c. 2.

the very representations proved the earthly character of the prototypes ;<sup>1</sup> they were images of men—men who had a history ; who once had no existence ; who were born, lived, and died upon this earth. They were called gods now, but their images were in the forms of men. The gods saw and heard indeed, but they had no need of eyes and ears, unless they were men. <sup>2</sup> Images were to remind men of those who were absent, or those who were dead. In which category did they intend to place the gods ? They needed not to make insensible statues ; man, living man, was the true image of God. <sup>3</sup> If the powers of nature were to be considered the deities, was it not better to look beyond these ? Their motion was fixed, not voluntary ; they were subject to change. <sup>4</sup> Our upright stature—our distinction from the brutes, taught us to look upwards to that place from whence we derived our origin ; from nature to nature's God.

But the Apologists took more particular objections ;<sup>5</sup> and investigated the whole range of mythology, to shew how unworthy of worship the Roman and Greek gods were. They shew that these gods had a beginning,—the world was created before them, and men lived before them. They had all the weaknesses of men, and they

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 28. Arn. adv. gentes, bk. v. Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 5, 6. Tert. ad Nationes, ii. 3, 5, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Octavius, c. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Arn. adv. gentes, bk. iii. Tert. ad Nat., ii. 9, 10, 11. Athen. Apol. c. 20, 21. Lact. Div. Inst., i. 11. Arn. adv. gentes, i. 34. Clem. Alex. Cohort, c. 2, 3, 4.

at length died; after their death they became gods. They were therefore not divine by nature; if they became gods,<sup>1</sup> it was because the great God, who made heaven and earth and themselves, gave to them their divinity on account of their merits. It was impossible to suppose that He had need of their services; for He had created all things before them. But what were their merits?<sup>2</sup> Were these so surpassing as to entitle them to their divinity? So far from this, their history shewed them to have been the worst of men. Slaves to their passions, their deeds were far more likely to sink them into hell than to exalt them into heaven. <sup>3</sup> This part of the subject is entered into with unnecessary minuteness by all the Apologists. They do not attempt to conceal the scorn which they feel towards those whom the heathen venerated and adored.

<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Romans argued, they are certainly gods, for it is by venerating them that Rome has reached its present height of prosperity. The premise on which the conclusion is based is denied by the Apologists; certain facts could be adduced for it,—certainly more could be adduced against it. In every battle, gods were on both sides. Rome prospered before Numa; but he was the first to introduce sacred rites. In every victory, the Romans triumphed over

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol., c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst., i. 16, 23. Arn. adv. gentes, i. 36, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Especially Clem. Alex. Cohortatio, c. 2, 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Tert. Apol., c. 25. Octavius, c. 6, 7, 25, 26. Cyp. de Van. Idol., c. 4, 5. Tert. ad. Nat., ii. 17.

gods, and not till then did they begin to worship them. If some generals had been defeated because they had despised the auguries, others had paid due attention to them, and yet had been taken captive. Nothing could be established on such uncertain evidence. A fundamental connection between success and piety had not been made out.

The untenability of the heathen mythology had been seen and confessed by their own writers, and it had been resolved by them into myths. The gods were personifications of the powers of nature; their history,—allegories expressing the facts of the course of nature. This explanation is rejected by the 'Apologists. They remark that, if the history of the gods is an allegory, the gods have no historical existence—that part of it at least is not myth, but history; that obscene myths (if myths they are) will have a like interpretation, so that the hypothesis does not improve the state of the case, and that, in point of fact, no interpretation is agreed upon. But what was the origin of Heathenism and its mythology? Was it all fiction, or was there some foundation of truth? "The Apologists believed the gods to be distinguished men, kings, inventors of arts, founders of cities, to whom a grateful posterity erected images as memorials. These images, simply venerated at first, afterwards became worshipped as gods. The history of these men had gradually been clothed in a

<sup>1</sup> Tatian. Orat. c. 21. Athen. Apol. c. 22. Arn. adv. gentes v. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. i. 15. Octavius c. 20, 21, 22, 23.



poetic and marvellous garb, and assumed a superhuman aspect. The mind of man gradually got depraved and earthly, and hence was led to worship things of earth. But was the whole heathen system of the earth? Was there nothing superhuman about it? Were the oracles mere lying inventions of priestcraft? The answer at the present time would probably be in the affirmative; not so that of the Apologists. If there is one doctrine more than another on which they insist, and on which they all agree, it is this:— 'That there were certain creatures, called demons, who were in reality the heathen gods; who, by their great powers and cunning, supported the heathen systems, gave voices to the oracles, and worked lying wonders. The belief in such existences is greatly questioned in the present day. All visible signs of their power have long since passed away. We are astonished if we come across a man so simple as to believe in the power of witchcraft. We lament the darkness and cruelty of our ancestors in dealing with those who were supposed to practise it; as such power does not exist now, we deny that it ever existed. A belief in such things, it is said, always passes away with the diffusion of knowledge.

It is not necessary to argue here as to whether demons ever had an existence or not; whether ignorance and credulity brought them into being. Knowing so

1 i. Just. Apol. c. 5, 14. Tat. Orat. c. 12, 16, 17, 18. Athen. Ap. c. 22, 26, 27. Tert. Apol. c. 22, 23. Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 27. Theoph. ad. Autol. ii. 8. Octavius c. 27.

little as we do of the unseen world and its powers, it might be sufficient to answer, that these powers may be very probably adapted to the age, and that whilst subjective agencies are the most powerful in an age of knowledge, objective appearances may have availed the most in an age of ignorance. It is quite sufficient for us here to throw the burden of proof of the existence of demons on Inspiration ; its language is plain and explicit, and the authority of the Apologists cannot be impugned because they insist strongly on a fact very clearly stated there.

The Apologists trace all the powers of Heathenism over men to the work of the demons. <sup>1</sup> They describe their origin, nature, method of working. They are the offspring of the intercourse of the sons of God with the daughters of men. Their nature is spiritual. They are powerful, but not all-powerful beings. They are cunning of insight, and swift of execution. <sup>2</sup> They fathomed deeper than man the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and straightway adapted them to the incidents in the lives of heroes and demi-gods. They were swift of flight, and gave the oracles that early information which seemed divine and was superhuman. Their great aim was to injure man by removing from him the knowledge of the truth. To this end all their cunning and superhuman activity has been exerted. They gave diseases in order that they might seem to cure them. They

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 22, 23. Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 8, 14. ii. Just. Apol. c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 54.

possessed men, and then departed from them, in order to enhance the credit of the gods when supplicated and sacrificed to. <sup>1</sup> The food for which they longed was the blood of the sacrifices, and hence they allured men to worship images. <sup>2</sup> They drew down men, by artful semblances, from the worship of God on high, to that of earthly and material substances. Hence their great aim was to destroy Christianity, and subvert the power of Christ. For this end they had been working for many generations, and for this end they were working now. <sup>3</sup> By imitation of the Christian ceremonies, by misrepresentation of the Christian doctrines, and persecution of the Christians themselves, they strove to weaken the force of the truth,—in short, were the prime movers in all the mischief done on the face of the earth. They were, however, subject to the power of the Christians; at their command they confessed what they were, even the very gods whom the Heathen worshipped; and they allowed the truth of the doctrines of Christianity, and finally went out from the bodies which they had possessed.

Here, one cannot refrain from remarking, what a personal character the conflict between light and darkness assumed in the eyes of the Apologists. They lived close to the time when the man Christ Jesus had lived amongst men, and they derived their conceptions

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol., c. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst., ii. 8. Athen. Apol., c. 27.

<sup>3</sup> i. Just. Apol., c. 5. 1 Just. Apol., c. 14, 56, 57, 58.

from His personal work. A personal God, the representative of truth, seemed to imply personal foes, the representatives of error, and these were the demons. Our conception of God is that of a Being who works by fixed laws; to this our perfected legislative system naturally directs our thoughts; from it we derive our notion of supreme justice. Their conception was of a Being who constantly directed the affairs of men; they lost sight of the law in the personal sovereign, and to this their political system led them: they lived under Imperialism. We take a wider view of God's dealings with men, convinced, as we rightly are, that all such dealings must, with Infinite Wisdom to guide them, take the form of some definite plan; but we have lost the vivid realization of a personal God, which the generations so near the life of Christ felt. In our reduction of the dealings of God to abstract principles, we have gained in knowledge, but we have lost in love.

There is one use to which the Apologists are able to place the heathen mythology; in it they find analogies to Christian doctrine. *That*, they argue, cannot be wholly inconceivable which we find in your own writings. They ascribe these resemblances to the cunning of the demons, who knew that error was only powerful as the semblance of truth, that the most powerful Anti-Christ was a Pseudo-Christ;<sup>1</sup> and hence contrived that gods and demi-gods should answer the predictions of the Old Testament Scriptures. But it is

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 23.

not too much to say, that the Apologists wholly fail in their proof. They find in the whole range of heathen mythology a few isolated analogies to Christian doctrine, and the life and nature of Christ. They are scarcely worthy of being called illustrations, but the Apologists elevate them into arguments. It would be strange indeed if the ancients had not invested their ideal men with some qualities, or interwoven some incidents into their lives, which should not be reproduced in the life of the Man. It is still more strange that the demons, with their prophetic insight and diabolical cunning, should not have concentrated their knowledge in the formation of one man, rather than scattered it (and so weakened the imitation) over different men and different ages. In the spirit which finds in the heathen mythology the facts of the Incarnation, we see that Gnostic Spirit which finds in the New Testament the system of *Æons*.

<sup>1</sup> The Apologists are not satisfied with shewing that, theoretically, the heathen religion cannot be defended; but they proceed further to shew how hurtful were its practical effects. With them, religion was a practical concern. They argue, that earth-born gods must produce earthly living; that he who worships objects of sense will necessarily be sensuous; that immoral gods will produce immoral worshippers. <sup>2</sup> The heathen religion consists in ritual and nothing more.

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 9. Lact. Div. Inst. v. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 3. v. 19.

No religion could be considered to be true which does not make the lives of men better, and which does not give them moral precepts, backed up with the hope of reward, and the fear of punishment. Thus vigorously and completely did the Christians attack the heathen religion. There was no defence<sup>1</sup> but in custom, antiquity, and policy. The most skilful opponents of the Christians were with them here, and are appealed to, to support their case; but the Christians claimed the sole possession of truth, and would not divide their inheritance, and so Heathenism being vanquished, Philosophy was also attacked.

To attack the heathen philosophy, so far as its results were concerned, was easy. By its own confession it was indefensible. <sup>2</sup>It disclaimed pronouncing with certainty on anything: all human things were dubious. Probabilities, not truths, were the results of its enquiries. After many years, it deliberates still. <sup>3</sup> It was not given to man to know that which is elevated in heaven above, or that which is deep sunk under the earth. To examine curiously into them is not permitted, and to treat irreverently of them is impious. It was enough for men to consider what is under their view, and nigh to them. The wisest of men had said, "That which is above us concerns us not." There was no hope of any improvement in this state of things. Things doubtful ought to be left in their present state

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Alex. Cohort. c. 10. Octavius, c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Octavius, c. 12. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 5.



of uncertainty, nor ought a definite sentence to be pronounced : Thus speaks the heathen in the dialogue of Minucius Felix.

Two characteristics of the heathen philosophy appear from the above, which the Apologists insist upon in their attacks. It was simply human,<sup>1</sup> and it was contradictory and uncertain. The first, it necessarily was, for it was not the offspring of revelation, but of human reason. The wisdom was of this world, and so whilst it might expose error, it could not create a system of truth. The philosophers were the wise men of the world ; they saw through the vanity of the pagan superstitions, but they had nothing to put in their place ;<sup>2</sup> they were obliged to give up either their reason, or their religion. Cicero had said, “ Would that it were as easy to discover truth as to expose falsehood.” The former was indeed beyond his power ; the work was divine, not human, no one could arrive at true knowledge unless he was taught of God.<sup>3</sup> But the voice of Philosophy was not only human, it gave forth an uncertain sound. There was no necessity for the Christians to refute the Philosophers, they refuted each other. Nothing was agreed upon—not even first principles ; it was, at the best, mere speculation. The wisest Philosophers had learnt to know that they

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. iii. 2, 3, 4. etc. Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 2, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 16. Arn. ad. gentes. ii. 11. Tat. Orat. c. 25. Just. Hort. c. 4, 5—8. Tert. ad. Nat. ii. 1, 2.

knew nothing. Naturally enough their teaching had no power to influence the masses. They required a guide speaking with authority and clearness. Hesitation destroys confidence sooner than blunders. Self-confidence is the first requisite of leadership. Nor, indeed, was Philosophy of a popular nature; it was an intellectual system, fitted only for a few.<sup>1</sup> The questions it discussed were words and names, and not practical subjects. It did not speak to the heart, nor to the senses, but to the intellect.<sup>2</sup> There was nothing of ritual in it to attack; no inward burning principles of action; it was cold and calm and unsensuous. It had indeed certain laws, but they were based on no rewards or punishments; they were simply theories, and were not carried into practice. It was a school of opinions, not a discipline of life.

<sup>3</sup> Against these slight aims, and slighter results of Philosophy, its partial application and its impractical nature, the Apologists contrasted the Christian Revelation; of divine nature and origin; speaking with authority and consistency; appealing to all, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, young and old. <sup>4</sup> In its very essence practical,—for those ceased to be Christians in name, who were not Christians in life. <sup>5</sup> Its precepts

<sup>1</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Lact, Div. Inst. iii. 16. iv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 29, 32. Athen. Apol. c. 9. Theoph. ad. Autol. ii. 9. Tert. Apol. c. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 23, 24.

no cold moral code, but the living words of a man, who himself fulfilled them in every respect, and for whose sake the Christians also obeyed them. <sup>1</sup> A code neither barren nor fruitless, but holding out the highest reward to the obedient,—the most fearful punishment to the disobedient. This was the Christian Philosophy; no wonder the Apologists triumph over their opponents. All else they count as dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord.

<sup>2</sup> But the Apologists find some germs of truth in the Philosophers, and they use them to establish Christian doctrine, and, in particular, to prove the unity of God. Their use of them is not always to be justified; the passages they quote are very often not to the point; they seem sometimes to be arbitrarily divorced from the context, and forced into use.

But how was it the Philosophers had in any way hit the truth? Various answers are returned, according to the varying sympathy of the writers. <sup>3</sup> Some trace it to the teaching of the prophets; the Philosophers had read their books, and borrowed from their opinions; this they endeavour to prove by specific instances. <sup>4</sup> Plato, especially, is accused of borrowing from Moses. The Apologists certainly do not prove their point;

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Just. Hort. c. 15—19. Athen. Apol. c. 5, 6, 7. Theoph. ad Autol. ii. 36, 37. i. Just. Apol. c. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 47. Just. Hort. c. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Just. Hort. c. 26, 29, 31. i. Just. Apol. c. 59, 60.

here and there they find coincidences of expression and thought, but this is all. Others, again, trace it to the subtlety of the demons. This has been referred to before. But the grandest and truest account is that given by Justin.<sup>1</sup> He had tried all the principal systems of Philosophy, and insufficient as they were to satisfy him, he still retained them in his affection. He loved to see in them the germs of Christianity, and find in Christianity their full development. He was not satisfied with viewing Christianity alone; he viewed it in relation to all other systems. He strove to find in them foreshadowings of truths, which Christianity afterwards more fully revealed. The Incarnation of Christ was to him the centre-point of history to which all the teaching of Prophets and Philosophers converged; from which all truth radiated. For it the world had gradually been prepared; God had never left Himself without a witness. He had ever been working in the minds of men, who knew Him not by name. Truth was God's gift, and His alone; every faint shadow of truth was a mark of the presence of God. Justin, connecting all truth with its greatest realization, all light with Him who is "The Light," referred these faint glimmerings to the presence of the Seminal Word. The λόγος incarnate brought to their full development those truths of which the λόγος σπερματικός had deposited the gem. Of the λόγος all races of men have been partakers. The proofs of this lie in the life.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Apol. c. 46. ii. Apol. c. 7—10, 13.

"They who have lived reasonably (*μετὰ λόγου*) are Christians, even though they have been thought to be Atheists." "Each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the Seminal Word," but they only saw through a glass, darkly. The seed and imitation implanted according to capacity is one thing, and quite another is the thing itself, of which the communication and imitation are given, according to the grace which is from him. One characteristic is common to all those in whom the Seminal Word lay hid, or in whom the Incarnate Word is developed ; a characteristic which they have in common with the Word Himself. Whether it be Socrates, Justin Martyr, or Christ, all are persecuted by those without the Word.

This belief in a partial inspiration of the heathen is not shared in by all the Apologists. Tertullian, in his uncompromising opposition to Heathenism, certainly does not believe in it ; but it is held by Clement of Alexandria in the third century,<sup>1</sup> and Lactantius in the fourth, though not in the beautiful form in which it is clothed by Justin.

The Apologists do not enter into elaborate arguments against the different systems of Philosophy ; this, perhaps, they were scarcely qualified to do ; for the most part they leave them to refute one another.<sup>2</sup> Lactantius, however, attacks the different systems

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Alex. Cohort, c. 6. Lact. Div. Inst. vii. 1, 7. Cf. also Athen. Apol. c. 7. Theoph. ad Autol. ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Div. Inst. iii. 17—24.

separately ; but this he does by pointing out defects, which it was easy to do, rather than by examining each system as a whole. He is inclined to be dogmatic, and and to characterise that as absurd which he does not understand : thus, for example, he makes merry at the idea of the antipodes ;<sup>1</sup> he cannot imagine any wise men believing in it ; he thinks he can prove by numerous arguments that it is utterly impossible. It may perhaps be wondered at, that, on the whole, the Apologists found so little to admire in Heathenism and Philosophy, but for this the time was not yet come ; they regarded both as deadly enemies to mankind. It was the glory of Christianity that it appealed to the whole man ;—body, soul, and spirit, had all their parts in the worship of God ;—that it harmonized reason and religion, wisdom and justice. It saw opposed to it an irrational religion, and an irreligious philosophy. A religion which appealed only to the senses, and a philosophy which appealed only to the intellect. It saw the dreadful effects of this on the world. Morality divorced both from Religion and Philosophy,—and reason and custom opposed to each other. There could be no truce with systems like these. This was no time for admiring beauties and bandying compliments. The world was perishing for lack of knowledge. It is different with us ; the Heathenism and Philosophy of the Ancients have no practical influence on those around us ; it was not so then. The Christian saw in

<sup>1</sup> Div. Inst. iii. 24.



them two mighty agencies of the powers of darkness, drawing down man from high and heavenly things to things of earth, and corrupting his nature to the very core. Now, that the fight is over, we may examine into the germs of truth contained in them, and the secrets of their power over mankind; but it is unnatural to suppose, that the Apologists would either have the power or the will to do this when the battle was at its hottest, and the issue still doubtful.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE APOLOGETIC ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIANITY.

**T**HERE is still one other leading branch of the writings of the Apologists to be considered. Hitherto their work has been negative ; they have proved themselves innocent of the accusations brought against them, and they have shewn the weakness, insufficiency, and falsehood of Heathenism and Philosophy ; now, their work has a more positive character. They explain the nature of Christianity ; they give some account of its prominent doctrines, especially those which had come before the notice of the heathen world, and had been misrepresented. Some of them add evidences of Christianity, and one or two give an account of its ceremonies. To examine the Apologetic account of the Christian doctrines, evidences, and ceremonies, is the object of the present chapter.

It is important for us to bear in mind the exact position in the argument of this branch of the Apologetic writings. To find this, we turn to the main objects and character of the Apologies. They are arguments put forth in defence of the Christians ; not

to convince the heathen. We very rarely find in them exhortations to become Christians, but very often appeals to put a stop to the persecutions. They are mainly intended to answer accusations and misrepresentations. <sup>1</sup> The Christians were charged with atheism, impiety, and worshipping monstrous things. The Apologists denied the charge; but they felt their denial would have greater weight, if they explained the nature and object of their worship; hence they speak of the Christian religion. <sup>2</sup> They were charged with being foolish, credulous people. They answered the charge, by shewing the hope, and the reason of the hope, that was in them; hence they speak of the Christian doctrines and evidences. Their society was charged with immoral practices—it was contrary to law. They shew how pure their meetings are, and how free they are from the characteristics of a faction, by giving an account of the Christian ceremonies.<sup>3</sup>

We have here two reasons for incompleteness in this branch of the subject: in the object for which it is introduced, and in the men to whom it is addressed. On the one hand it does not form an essential part of the subject; on the other, it is not addressed to men acquainted with the Christian writings, or even anxious to learn; but to men whose knowledge of Christianity was derived from popular rumour, or from the state-

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 6. Tert. Apol. c. 16. Octavius, c. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Octavius, c. 8, 12 Tert. Apol. c. 19, 20,

<sup>3</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 39. i. Just. Apol. c. 61, 65, 66, 67.

ments of Christians brought before the tribunals. For such men, all that could be of use was to give a superficial sketch of leading features, and this is all that the Apologists attempt, and is a sufficient explanation of their shortcomings in the treatment of the subject.

The first and most prominent feature of Christianity, as viewed by the Christians of the day, is this: It is a monotheism. The Apologists viewed Christianity in contrast with the heathen religions around them. <sup>1</sup>These have as many gods as the stars in the blackness of the night. To the Christians there is but one God, the Father of all things, shining like the sun in the brightness of the day. It is by comparison with the heathen divinities that the Apologists shew the nature of the God of the Christians, but we shall not follow them into their comparison. The character of the heathen divinities has been already discussed; we shall simply give <sup>2</sup> Tertullian's description of the Christians' God. "The object," he says, "of our worship is the One God; He who by His commanding word, His arranging wisdom, His mighty power, brought forth from nothing this entire mass of our world, with all its array of elements, bodies, spirits, for the glory of His majesty; whence also the Greeks have bestowed on it the name of *κόσμος*. The eye cannot see Him, though He is visible. He is incomprehensible, though in grace he is manifested. He is beyond our utmost thought, though our human faculties conceive of Him. He is therefore

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. c. 17.

equally real and great. That which, in the ordinary sense, can be seen, and handled, and conceived, is inferior to the eyes by which it is taken in, and the hands by which it is tainted, and the faculties by which it is discovered ; but that which is infinite is known only to itself. This it is which gives some notion of God, while yet beyond all our conceptions. Our very incapacity of fully grasping Him affords us the idea of what He really is. He is presented to our minds in His transcendent greatness, as at once known and unknown. And this is the crowning guilt of men, that they will not recognise One, of whom they cannot possibly be ignorant." Such was the Christian conception of God ; there is no inadequacy here ; a contrast with heathen conceptions would be absurd.

When we turn from the abstract idea of God, to God in His dealings with mankind, the superiority of the Christian conception is clearly marked. The heathen deities did indeed concern themselves with the affairs of earth, being, in fact, men on a larger and more powerful scale ; they came and meddled and tyrannised amongst men in much the same way as a few big boys might in a school of little ones ; like them, taking opposite sides in any dispute, utterly unreasonable in their likes and dislikes, and thwarting each other to the best of their power. But they were confessedly not all-powerful beings. There was a power above them of which they were conscious, but whose dealings they

so little understood, that they gave it no form.<sup>1</sup> Against this abstract power, which they called Fate, it was useless to struggle, gods and men were alike powerless in its hands. Christianity, however, came in with its flood of light, and transformed the abstract Fate into a personal God, who watched over His creatures with all the tenderness of a Father, and all the power of an Almighty Being.

<sup>2</sup> The heathen never imagined that close, personal attention, extending to thoughts and words, that ever-watchful, ever-present care which the Christian represented his God as exercising over the affairs of men ; such ideas appeared to him absurd. <sup>3</sup> In the language of the heathen, in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, "What strange and portentous imaginations do the Christians form to themselves concerning their Deity? That this God of theirs, whom they cannot shew to others, nor themselves see, carefully examines into the dispositions of all men, and into the behaviour of all men, and even into their words and most secret thoughts. They describe Him as continually running hither and thither, and as present everywhere ; as a Being troublesome, restless, and immoderately inquisitive ; who, at all actions is a bystander, and who strays into every place, although it is impossible that he should regard particulars while attentive to the whole, or be sufficient for the whole while he is occupied about particulars."

<sup>1</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 8, 9. Arn. adv. gentes, i. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Origen c. Celsum, iv. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Octavius, c. 10.



<sup>1</sup> The Christian says, "All things celestial and earthly are known to Him, and full of Him." "He is in all places most near to us; nay, He is infused into us all. Consider, again, the sun, fixed in heaven, and yet spread out over the whole earth; he is equally present in all places, and blended with the whole creation, and everywhere his brightness remains inviolate. How much more is God, who made and who surveys all things,—how much more is He present in darkness, and present even in that profound darkness—our thoughts! We not only act under His inspection, but, I had almost said, we live with him." "Neither let us men amuse ourselves with the fond hope of impunity because of our numbers. In our own sight we are many, but to God we appear very few. We make distinctions of peoples and countries, but to Him the whole world is as one house. Kings are not otherwise acquainted with the details of their dominions than by the ministration of inferior officers; but God needs not to be informed of ought, for we live not only under His eyes, but in His bosom."

When we come to look for proof of the existence and the unity of God, we find that the first question is for the most part passed over by the Apologists. It was not a question in dispute, except with one section of philosophers. <sup>2</sup>The heathen, in Minucius Felix, however, supposes that the world may be a collection of fortuitous atoms, and that the existence of God is at best uncertain,

<sup>1</sup> c. 32, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Octavius, c. 5.

<sup>1</sup> and the Christian, in reply, deduces the existence of a Supreme Being from the evidences of design in Nature. To create, to form, and to arrange all things in the universe there was needed, he thinks, a prime Artificer, and perfect Intelligence. <sup>2</sup> Lactantius, afterwards, uses the same arguments, but the rest of the Apologists leave the difficulty unnoticed. For the unity of God they find proofs in the nature of things, and in the testimony of the simple uneducated soul.<sup>3</sup> The first of these has been already noticed; the second, which we owe to Tertullian, requires careful attention, but it will be better discussed under the head of evidences.

Next to the unity and nature of God, the doctrines which the Apologists bring most prominently forward are, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body. Like the doctrine of the unity of God, these were not exclusively Christian, or even Jewish; but the Christians were the first to draw marked attention to them, and to give them a practical bearing. Some few poets and philosophers had believed in the immortality of the soul, but it was not a doctrine generally received. <sup>4</sup> The heathen, in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, speaks of it as a fiction of a crazed fancy, and a foolish topic of consolation on which the poets have sported in melodious and deceitful verse. He argues that the God who will not, or cannot aid his own in this life, who takes no heed of their sufferings, cannot be able to

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Div. Inst. i. 2.

<sup>3</sup> De Test. Anim.

<sup>4</sup> Octavius, c. 10, 11, 12.

restore men to life. "It is madness," he says, "to promise immortality, after death and extinction, to us men, who as we came into being, so must also cease to be."

In proof of these doctrines the Apologists give various arguments. <sup>1</sup> Justin finds a reason for the immortality of the soul in the divination and necromancy practised by the heathen. <sup>2</sup> Lactantius gives the arguments of Plato, and supplements them by one derived from the capacity of the soul for the knowledge of God. That which is capable of the knowledge of eternal things is itself eternal. Man is capable of virtue; virtue despises earthly things; its reward is therefore not here, but hereafter.

<sup>3</sup> The argument from analogy is that used to prove the resurrection of the body. Our bodies came from nothing, why should they not be re-formed from nothing? It is more difficult to begin to make that to be which is not, than to re-create it after it has once been. A thing is not lost in the sight of God because withdrawn from our notice. All nature seems to give preludes of a resurrection hereafter. "The sun sinks in the ocean and emerges; the planets glide on in their course and come back; the flowers fall and live anew; after a temporary old age the shrubs re-assume their foliage; and seeds must be corrupted before they can put forth shoots. So is the body in the grave; it resembles trees,

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Div. Inst. vii. 8—13.

<sup>3</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 48. Theoph. ad Autol. i. 13. Octavius, c. 34.

which in winter conceal their vegetation under a feigned appearance of withering. Why should you be impatient for its revival and restoration while winter is yet intense? We must await the spring-time of the body." Such is the language of the Christian in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, and similar language is used by Theophilus and Tertullian.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Some of the Apologists held peculiar opinions concerning the immortality of the soul; they denied that the soul was immortal by nature; it was only capable of immortality if this is given it by God. If it were immortal, they say, it could not be susceptible of change, it could not lose any knowledge it has, or it would be capable of destruction; it could not gain any, or it would be capable of losing it; it could not have had a beginning, or it must be capable of having an end.

The doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, connected as they were with the last judgment, the destruction of the world, and the coming of the Lord, had a most important bearing on the lives of the early Christians. "We," says <sup>3</sup> Tertullian, "who receive our awards under the judgment of an all-seeing God, and who look forward to eternal punishment from Him for sin; we alone make real effort to attain a blameless life, under the influence

<sup>1</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. i. 13. Tert. Apol. c. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Just. Dial. c. 5. Tat. Orat. c. 13. Arn. adv. gentes ii. 15—35.

<sup>3</sup> Apol. c. 45.

of our ampler knowledge, and the impossibility of concealment, and the greatness of the threatened torment,—not merely long-enduring, but everlasting.” “If we believed,” says <sup>1</sup> Athenagoras, “that we should live only the present life, then we might be suspected of sinning ; but since we are persuaded, that when we are removed from the present life, we shall live another life, better than the present one, and heavenly ; or, perishing with the rest, a worse one—even in fire ; it is not likely that we should wish to do evil, or deliver ourselves over to the Great Judge to be punished.” “In contemplation of a happy resurrection,” says <sup>2</sup> Minucius Felix, “the Christians lived happily,” they knew that “they were not brought to an end by death ;” and this nerved them in all their sufferings.

We pass on now to the doctrines exclusively Christian ; those which had a connection with the nature of Christ. They are summed up in a few words by <sup>3</sup> Arnobius. “The Christian religion consists in the worship of Christ.” The Christian religion differs from the Jewish, according to <sup>4</sup> Tertullian, in its conception of the nature of Christ. The Christians believed Christ to be a God, the Jew believed He was only a man.

Going more into details, the following is the account given by the Apologists of the Christian religion. <sup>5</sup> They

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 31.    <sup>2</sup> Octavius, c. 38.    <sup>3</sup> Arn. adv. Gentes i. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Apol. c. 21.

<sup>5</sup> i Just. Apol. c. 13.    Tert. Apol. c. 20.    Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 29.  
Athen. Apol. c. 10.    Tat. Orat. c. 5.



assert that Jesus Christ, the teacher of the Christians, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, was begotten of the Father before all creatures, and was, therefore, called the Son of God. That by Him God made the worlds, and that hence he was called the Reason, or Word, or Power of God. That He was of one substance with God, and is hence Himself called God. There are not, however, two Gods, there has been no division of the divine substance, only an extension. A ray shot from the sun is still part of the parent mass. Thus Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God ; as, light of light is kindled. The material matrix remains entire and unimpaired, though you derive from it any number of shoots, possessed of its qualities ; so, too, that which has come forth out of God is at once God, and the Son of God ; and the two are one. In this way also, as He is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, He is made a second in- manner of existence, in position, not in nature ; and He did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth. This ray of God, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is, in His birth, God and man united. The mighty works which Christ did upon earth were a natural consequence of His nature, of His being God as well as man. He came down upon earth to teach men ; to restore to them the wisdom they had lost ; to give to them the promise of eternal life. <sup>1</sup>His incarnation was necessary, in order that He might shew men, by His example, that

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 24.



it was possible to keep the precepts He gave. The teacher must be similar to his scholar; the body is the cause of sin, and, therefore, the teacher must have a body, if he would shew that its passions are not invincible. For the same reason, it was necessary for Christ to die, for the body is necessarily mortal. Christ's death was accompanied by many wonders. He lay in the grave for three days only, and then rose again; and after having been seen of His disciples forty days, He ascended into Heaven, from whence He will speedily return to judge all men.

The chief observation to be made on the above is, <sup>1</sup> the distinct subordination of the Son to the Father,—the Son is indeed of one substance with the Father, there is no inferiority of nature; but there is inferiority in degree. <sup>2</sup> It is only a part of the substance of the Father which is contained in the Son. Some of the Apologists seem; indeed, to take a lower view of the Christ than even this. <sup>3</sup> Thus Lactantius seems to suppose that Christ received the name of God on account of His merits.

We also remark on the value which the Apologists believe the life and death of Christ to have. Their usual way of regarding the Advent of Christ is, that it was the incarnation of the λόγος; its chief result was, the restoration of wisdom to the world. The efficacy of Christ's death and sufferings is rarely referred to by

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 13.      ii. Just. Apol. c. 6, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 14.

them. They probably thought it a doctrine too sacred to be touched on in works like theirs.

<sup>1</sup> Two, however, of the Apologists, Origen and Lactantius, discuss this point, and with different results. Origen evidently attached to the death of Christ a propitiatory value. Christ was the sinless offering who was delivered up for those who had sinned; He was the Lamb of God who voluntarily suffered death for the benefit of mankind. On the other hand, Lactantius evidently attached no such propitiatory value to Christ's death. He discusses the symbolism of the crucifixion at great length. He believes Christ's sufferings to have a deep significance; but he does not even allude to anything of a propitiatory character. Christ was an example, and nothing more.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is rarely referred to by the Apologists. <sup>2</sup> Justin seems, in one passage, to place Him only on an equality with the angels. <sup>3</sup> In another, however, he places, "the prophetic Spirit as third in order." <sup>4</sup> In Athenagoras, we find the following,—“The Holy Spirit Himself also, which operates in the prophets, we assert to be an effluence of God, flowing from Him, and returning back again like a beam of the sun.” <sup>5</sup> It is difficult in many instances to see whether the term, “Spirit of God,” refers to any distinct personality or not. The doctrine of the Spirit

<sup>1</sup> Origen, c. Celsum, i. 69; ii. 10, 11. Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 26.

<sup>2</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 6.

<sup>3</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Theoph. ad. Autol. ii. 9.

probably was not clearly defined in the minds of the Apologists; and the Apologies are not the places that we should expect to find it discussed. We may, however, be surprised at the silence of Lactantius on the subject; <sup>1</sup> he devotes a chapter to shewing, that whilst the Father is God, and the Son is God,—there are not two Gods but one God; but he does not make any allusion to the third person in the Trinity, though it seems necessary that he should.

The remarks which the Apologists make with reference to the nature of man, are, for the most part, incidental; one doctrine, however, some of them clearly hold, viz., the freedom of the Will.<sup>2</sup> On it they base all human responsibility, and in it they see a mark of their superiority to the heathen gods, who are subject to fate. Some of them, also, refer to the doctrine of the fall of man. Tertullian speaks of men being <sup>3</sup> “tainted in their descent” from Adam; and Origen joins sin with the generation of men. We shall not investigate this subject further; as it is foreign to a general discussion on the character of the Apologies. When the Apologists spoke of Christianity, they did not view it as a system of doctrines, but as a system producing great results on the life. God is not to be served by material offerings, <sup>4</sup> says Justin, but by imitating the

<sup>1</sup> Div. Inst. iv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 24. Theoph. ad Autol. i. 7; ii. 27. i. Just. Apol. c. 43. Tat. Orat. c. 7, 9, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Tert. de Test. Anim. c. 3. Orig. c. Cels. vii. 50.

<sup>4</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 10.

divine virtues. <sup>1</sup> Lactantius places the whole of Christianity in virtuous living. The gift of a Christian to God is, his purity of mind ; the sacrifice which he offers is, the sacrifice of praise. A few words must be said as to the importance the Apologists attach to the Sacred Scriptures. The character of their writings prevented them, for the most part, from quoting the Scriptures as authoritative documents ; but they constantly refer to them as the source of their information. <sup>2</sup> They believe that the prophets were inspired by Divine power. Justin says, that "when you hear the utterance of the prophets, spoken as it were personally, you must not suppose they are spoken by the inspired themselves, but by the divine Word." We must, however, make a great distinction between the Old and New Testament ; the inspiration of the latter, was not as yet clearly recognized ; <sup>3</sup> some of the Apologists endeavour to prove the authenticity of the gospels, but their inspiration is rarely <sup>4</sup> asserted ; they were not of the same importance to the early Christians as to ourselves ; for they possessed other sources of information. The doctrines of Christianity were divine ; but the necessity for a divine record of its facts was not as yet felt. The Apologists prove the inspiration of the prophets, by shewing that the predictions they contain

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. vi. 24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Theop. ad Autol. i. 14 ; ii. 9. Tert. Apol. c. 20. i. Just. Apol. c. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Arn. adv. gentes, i. 54, 55. Origen, c. Celsum. <sup>4</sup> Cf. however, Theop. ad Autol. iii. 12.

have been fulfilled ; and by the simplicity, harmony, and purity of the doctrine they contain. The inspiration of the books of the New Testament was not capable of the same proof ; an appeal to internal evidence would not have proved, from their point of view, the books to be inspired, but that Christ was God.

The proof of distinctively Christian doctrines is closely connected with the Christian Evidences, and to this part of our subject we now turn. We must not, for reasons we have already given, expect a complete body of Christian evidences in the several Apologies ; some of them do not treat on this branch of the subject at all ;—in all, they are incomplete and ill-arranged ; in some, we find arguments used unworthy of the name. If, however, we take the whole range of Apologetic literature, and combine together the various evidences we find in them, we shall be able to construct a defence of Christianity nearly, though not exactly, complete. There are indeed evidences of Christianity in the present day which had no existence in the first three centuries, defences which modern attack has called forth ; such, for instance, as critical defences of the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred writings. And there is, in addition, that great evidence which we find in the fact, that Christianity has, through eighteen centuries, drawn all men into it. These, of course, we cannot find in the Apologists. Apart from these, we think that there has been little added by later ages, except by way of arrangement and development. Much, of course, of the



argument which we find in the Apologists is useless now, but this often arises from the different character of the attack, which has been always varying,—and of necessity, being the product of varying ages ; still, with this element of change, there has been one great element of stability, the key of the position of Christianity remains fixed. The point to be decided then, and now, is the same,—Is Christ God, or is he only man ?

The foundation-stone of Christianity is not a system of precepts, or maxims, or doctrines, but a person and a history. It is the life and death of Jesus Christ. Here, in modern times, the attack begins and rages most fiercely. The authenticity and genuineness of the Gospel narratives is called in question. We have now no other reliable sources of information, and it is felt that if the substantial truth of these accounts is once admitted, there is little room for further dispute ; if their story is true, He of whom they tell was what He claimed to be—truly Divine.

It was far otherwise in the days of the Apologists. The New Testament Scriptures are rarely quoted by them for the events of Christ's life. Whether the gospels were their chief authorities or not, they had other sources of information. An enthusiastic love for Christ's person was the bond which bound the most closely-united people on the face of the earth together ; and a long time must have elapsed before the traditions of eye-witnesses, graphic accounts of words, looks, and gestures, which have been lost now for ages, were sup-



planted by the less life-like, more formal, yet more accurate, written accounts. To preach the Gospel, and to disseminate the gospels, were in those days, at any rate, widely different things ; and the facts of the Gospel would be made known to the heathen in many different ways.

There are traces of a heathen tradition giving inadequate, indeed, but not altogether false notions of Christ. Some who rejected Christianity had the highest reverence for its author. <sup>1</sup> There were genuine, as well as forged, *acta Pilati*, and some of the heathen information may have been obtained from these. Whatever the sources of information, however, some they did possess. <sup>2</sup> The oracles were consulted by Pagans as to whether Christ might be worshipped along with the heathen gods, and the priests, who composed the answer, were careful of saying anything disrespectful of Christ Himself. He was, they said, pre-eminent in piety, and His pious soul had risen to the fields of heaven. <sup>3</sup> Porphyry takes occasion to say, that Christ must not be calumniated ; and the eclectic <sup>3</sup> Alexander Severus had a bust of Christ in his *Lararium*. He intended to have caused Christ to be enrolled amongst the Roman deities ; and he constantly repeated the words of Christ, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Neander's C. History, vol. i. p. 239, Bohn's Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Neand. vol. i. p. 239.      <sup>4</sup> Neand. vol. i. p. 173.

There were, then, some stories of Christ's character and teaching current amongst the Heathen, which the Christians could appeal to as unquestionably true. Christ would be known as a Jew, who lived in the time of Tiberius, who laid claim to miraculous powers, and who was remarkable for His morality, the purity of His teaching, and His love for mankind; but who, owing to the jealousy of the Jews, was put to death under Pontius Pilate. They would be also aware of the fact, that He, though crucified as a malefactor, was worshipped by the Christians as a <sup>1</sup> God: indeed, this is one of the reproaches cast upon the Christians. It may be said, that the above information was derived from the Gospels. Celsus, we know, was well acquainted with them; but the supposition of a heathen tradition would more probably account for the partial belief in, and reverence for, Christ which was displayed. Information derived from such a source would be believed, the Gospels would not; and in the earliest times they were not well known. To this heathen tradition, which would exist from the very first, new sources of information would soon be added. Many would listen to the words of Christian preachers and teachers; many would watch with admiration the fortitude of the Christian martyr, and listen to his dying words. Still later, the contents of Christian writings would be more or less known. The works themselves would be seen by few, but their contents would be known by many. In a

<sup>1</sup> Arn. adv. gentes. i. 36. Just. Dial. c. 10, 64.

short time, moreover, there would be few families who were not personally acquainted with some Christian, and had not heard from his lips the story of Christ. By means such as these, a knowledge of Christianity was spread. If we contrast these agencies, so various and so undefined, so independent of one another, so difficult to gainsay, because so difficult to grasp, with our own single means of information, on which we altogether depend, we shall see the reason why, in these days, the point of attack has changed. If the heathen had attacked the Gospels, other evidence might have been appealed to ; the struggle would not have been on a decisive point. The dispute, therefore, in the time of the Apologists, did not so much turn on the facts of Christianity, as on inferences from facts. The facts were neither believed nor denied ; but, for the most part, the heathen would confess that there was something miraculous in the Christian story.

The chief evidence to which the Apologists appeal, is that of prophecy. They told the heathen that many hundred years ago, and at different times, prophets had appeared, and had predicted that a man would arise, who would do wonderful works, and that their predictions were so exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as to prove that they undoubtedly referred to Him. It is by an appeal to these that <sup>1</sup> Justin met the hypothesis that Christ worked His miracles by the power of magic. It was as if he said,—A magician is an unaccountable

<sup>1</sup> i. Apol. c. 30.

phenomenon in history ; he has no place in the natural order of events ; he is a prodigy, and nothing more ; he cannot be the goal of national hopes, much less the desire of all nations ; he is an unpredictable meteor, not a foretold star. Christ had been longingly waited for by a nation through many ages, and this proved that He was no magician.

It was important to show that the prophetical books were not formed after the event ; and, for this, indisputable evidence is found in the existence of the Septuagint translation made from the Hebrew original, long before Christ came. <sup>1</sup> Justin particularly gives a detailed account of the time, place, and occasion of the translation, for this purpose. A certain antiquity is thus proved for the prophetical writings ; and this is all the proof the Apologists give for their authenticity ; they do not attempt to prove that they were the writings of the authors, or of the times to which they were attributed ; such an investigation was altogether foreign to the notions of the age.

Whilst most of the Apologists give, as an evidence of Christianity, the Old Testament Scriptures, being ancient documents so remarkable for their simplicity harmony, and rationality of teaching, as to shew they were written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, there are only four—Justin Martyr, Origen, Theophilus, and Lactantius—who quote them at any length. Justin Martyr and Lactantius give prophecies of Christ con-

<sup>1</sup> i Apol. c. 31.

tained in the Old Testament ; they adduce all those passages which have been commonly referred to as the most marked predictions of the Messiah ; but they mix up with them passages which can, at the best, be only doubtfully adapted to their purpose, and others which do not appear to have the slightest reference to the points they wish to prove. It would seem, that even amongst those passages of the Old Testament which undoubtedly refer to Christ, two classes may be distinguished,—those which might convince an infidel, and those which would only comfort a believer ; the one class which are signs even to those who do not believe, and the other which are signs to those who do. It is plain, that in Apologetic treatises, the former only are in place ; but Justin and Lactantius make no distinction between them, they view the Old Testament from their stand-points as believers, and, in consequence, many of the passages they adduce are inappropriate.<sup>1</sup> Origen, in his answer to Celsus, is far more cautious ; he selects passages better adapted to his ends.

Theophilus quotes the writings of the Old Testament with a different object from the others ; he wishes to shew the consistency and harmony of revelation ; to call attention to the accuracy of its information on points where profane history gives none whatever ; and to prove the morality of the precepts it contains ; and although his interpretations are of a very arbitrary nature, he does not fall into the same errors of judg-

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, i. 35, 56, 53, 54, 55.



ment as Justin and Lactantius. Theophilus was writing to a private individual, and his quotations of Scripture may be defended. The character of the works of Lactantius and Origen sufficiently explain their quotations; but Justin was writing an Apology for the Christians addressed to an Emperor, and quotations of the Scriptures were decidedly out of place; their authority was not allowed by him whom he addressed, and he should have used, as <sup>1</sup> Lactantius says of another Apologist, a minor offender against the same rule, arguments from reason, not testimonies from Scripture

We proceed now to the second great evidence for Christianity—its Miracles.

Here, the Apologists were met on the threshold by the objection that they were the works of magic; it was easier in those days to account for them in this way, than to deny their existence. The method by which Justin, and after him, Lactantius, overcame this difficulty, has been already referred to:—they combined together the evidences of miracles and prophecy. But it must not be supposed that none of the Apologists were unable to discern any difference between Christian and non-Christian miracles; <sup>2</sup> the earlier, indeed all the Greek Apologists, with the exception of <sup>3</sup> Quadratus, Origen, and Tatian, seem doubtful about the question; but from Tertullian downwards, the distinctions between them gradually came to be recognized.

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Eus. Hist. Ecc. iv. 3 Tat. Orat. c. 16. Orig. c. Celsum, i. 38.



<sup>1</sup> Tertullian traces the heathen miracles to the subtlety and superhuman activity of the demons; the demons, are, however, subject to the Christians, and therefore the demon miracles are inferior to the Christian. He denies, moreover, that the former are ever beneficial to man. <sup>2</sup> Origen distinguished the miracles worked by magic from those worked by Christ, by comparing the objects for which each were worked. The dealers in magical arts performed their works only for show; their lives were full of the grossest and most notorious sins. Christ, on the other hand, performed His to induce those who saw them to reform their manners, and He was Himself a pattern of a most virtuous life. <sup>3</sup> Lactantius denies that magic has any power, except to deceive the eyes. But the Apologist, who most clearly and completely draws out the distinction between Christ's miracles and those of all others, is Arnobius; and the masterly manner in which he performs his task, forms the main value of his Apology. <sup>4</sup> He begins by challenging his opponents to bring a magician, who did anything worthy of being compared with the works of Christ. <sup>5</sup> Christ did His works without the use of any means, whether incantations, the juice of herbs, or the observance of rites and times. His miracles were beneficial in their results, and they were worked by His own power. <sup>6</sup> On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 21, 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Orig. c. Celsum. i. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Div. Inst. iv. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Arn. adv. gentes, i. 43—58.

<sup>5</sup> c. 48.

<sup>6</sup> c. 43.

the works of magicians are not necessarily supernatural ; they may be the results merely of great skill, power, or cunning ; they are harmful in their results, and they are not done by their own might, but by the power of those whom they invoke. <sup>1</sup> Diseases, calamities, death, come on men by the power of fate ; to fate, the gods are subject ; they can do nothing against it :—Christ, then, when He healed men and raised them from the dead, was mightier than fate, and *a fortiori* mightier than the gods ; works therefore done by His power, must be greater than those done by the power of the gods. <sup>2</sup> Many came to the gods for relief, and returned uncured,—Christ repulsed no one that came to Him, He sent no man empty away. <sup>3</sup> Christ had not only the power of working miracles Himself, but he was able to delegate it to others :—and this not only to wise and learned men, but to poor uneducated fishermen, and country folk. Jupiter never had this power. <sup>4</sup> To the heathen objection, that these wonderful deeds were never done, Arnobius replies,—they are asserted on the evidence of eyewitnesses, who, when they might have lived in peace, chose to endure gratuitous hatred, and to be held in execration, for the sake of spreading the account of them. <sup>5</sup> How is it, that if they are false, the religion which is based on them has in so short a time spread over the whole world ; so that nations most diverse in country and climate agree in believing

<sup>1</sup> c. 47.<sup>2</sup> c. 49.<sup>3</sup> c. 50, 51.<sup>4</sup> c. 54.<sup>5</sup> c. 55.

it? <sup>1</sup> You object, that the Christian writers were unlearned and ignorant men; then it is more likely that they were free from artifice. Arnobius' argument might be summed up thus,—The miraculous powers of Christ differed from those of the heathen in—

- (I.) The character of the means used.
- (II.) The character of the results achieved.
- (III.) The universality of the success of their application.
- (IV.) The power of transmission.
- (V) The practical results which a belief in them produced.

<sup>2</sup> Arnobius, in another place, gives an *a priori* reason for supposing that Christ worked miracles. He argues, that if Christ had used talk and empty boasts, no one would have followed Him; deeds were required to induce nations and peoples, most dissimilar in manners, to agree with Him with one mind.

Connected with this branch of the subject, is an argument which <sup>3</sup> Tertullian drew from the power of exorcism in the Church. He indicates that the power of the Christians over the demons was used to extort from them the truth of the doctrines of Christianity; and he is quite ready to rest the truth of Christianity on the issue of the conflict, between any humble Christian and a demon possessing a human body. As, however, this will be referred to afterwards, we shall not dwell further upon it now.

<sup>1</sup> c. 58.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Apol. c. 23.

We pass on, in the third place, to that testimony to the truth of Christianity which is found in its perfect adaptation to the human race. We cannot do better than give the language of Arnobius.<sup>1</sup> He says:—

“Do not these arguments for belief produce faith in you? That, already, throughout all lands, in so short a period, the sacraments of this name have been diffused; that there is no nation so barbarous and so wild that its love has not softened their roughness, and made them peaceful; that orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, doctors, and philosophers, of great mark, trust in that faith which formerly they despised; that slaves prefer to be tortured, the married to be divorced, sons to be disinherited, rather than break their Christian faith, and lay aside the oaths of their beneficial warfare. That, notwithstanding so many kinds of penalties are appointed to those who follow the laws of this religion, the cause gathers strength, nay, is even stimulated by persecution. Is not this a proof that it is divine? that, when so many tortures hang over the heads of believers, they prefer the friendship of Christ to all the riches of the world; being, as it were, impelled by a certain sweetness, and new love of all the virtues.”

The Apologies abound in various arguments of this character, but nowhere do we find them so well arranged and combined as in this passage.

There is a subtle argument, which we owe to Tertulian,<sup>2</sup> and which we afterwards find used by Cyprian,

<sup>1</sup> Adv. gentes, ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> De. Testimonio Animæ.

Minucius Felix, Lactantius, and Arnobius, which will best find its place here.

Tertullian had no mind to search heathen literature for testimonies in favour of Christianity ; such a work appeared to him to be a profanation of the ark. In consequence, he, alone, of all the Apologists, uses no evidences of this kind to shew that Christianity was true, or rather, not inconceivable ; such arguments were easily set aside ; they required great research ; all were not familiar with the sources from which they were taken. In their place he called in a new witness, more simple, and better known than those it displaced,—the soul of man ;—that, whatever its nature, which makes man a rational being ; not indeed the soul trained and fashioned in the wisdom of the world,—but the soul, simple, rude, unlearned in earthly wisdom, untaught, as far as might be, except by itself and its Author : though not yet Christian, he calls upon it to give its evidence for Christians, to put to shame its friends. He, first of all, calls it to prove the nature of God ; he finds its evidence in certain expressions which it uses naturally and constantly. When expressing its hopes and wishes, it does not invoke any god of the Pantheon for help ; but, whatever its religion, it uses the simple expressions, “ Which may God grant,” “ If God so will ;” it thus acknowledges the existence of a Supreme Divinity, in whose power it is placed. Yet, again, the common expressions, “ God is good,” and “ God does good,” shew a knowledge of the nature of



God, and seem almost to imply that man is evil, and has departed from God. The use of the same name to bless and curse, shews that the soul acknowledges God's providence and authority; that He has an interest in the concerns of men; that He rewards and punishes their actions; and it shews a fear of the good God,—and fear implies anger. This testimony of the soul to a supreme God is given even in the temple of the gods, whilst a man is engaged in the sacred rites; whilst he is standing by the sacred statues, his soul passes beyond its objects of worship, to a God above them. In the immediate presence of a god, it appeals to a God who is elsewhere. Not only does the soul bear witness to a supreme God; the language which is constantly on its lips proves the existence of evil spirits, the immortality of the soul, and a future judgment. In expressing vexation, contempt, or abhorrence, it has Satan constantly on its lips. When speaking of the dead, it says, "Poor man." "He is gone." He is not poor who is destitute of sense. He is gone;—then he will return.

There is an obvious answer to this argument, which Tertullian mentions. The expressions he makes use of may only be an accommodation to existing prejudices; they may have had their origin and become common from arguments used in books. To meet this, he appeals to the nature of language. A word is but an embodiment of a thought; thoughts are the offspring of the soul; words existed long before books; before



the cultivated poet or philosopher, came the rude and simple man. We have, then, to search for the origin of such expressions in the nature of man, who found need for them as expressing some deep feeling within him. The soul is the gift of God to man. Its nature is divine. God is its teacher. It is a witness for God upon earth. The Christians claim to have another witness in God's revealed Word ; it is a proof of the truth of their claim that these two witnesses agree together. So far as this argument is valid, it proves either an inward capacity of man for the discovery of the truth, or the existence of an early revelation. The latter appears to be the more probable. There does not seem to be any faculty of man corresponding to the former ; all that he can do is to recognize truth when presented to him.

There is one important defect in Tertullian's argument ; his instances are drawn from two languages only, and these modern ; and they only prove national and modern, not human and ancient, traditions. He asserts, indeed, that these testimonies are to be found in other languages than the Latin and Greek, and it is probably the case. To enter into a discussion of this would open the wide question, how far traces may be found amongst all nations of a belief in a Supreme Providence, and a future state. Tertullian's argument was valid for his purpose ; it would have its effect on the Romans and Greeks whom he addressed. Before,

however, it is valid for us, the important question stated above would have to be answered.

We pass on to the Christian Ceremonies. The circumstances of the times prevented these being very elaborate, and there are indications that the Christians, in those days, <sup>1</sup> thought very little of the outward forms of worship. There were, indeed, certain reasons which rendered an appeal to the senses, through ritual, less necessary to the Church in early times than in our own. The use of ritual is only instrumental in the Christian religion; it attracts the senses: and through the senses, the higher parts of man's nature are reached. The early Christians were possessed of other means than ritual for appealing to the senses; they saw continually wonderful works performed by the power, and in the name, of Christ, and if we believe the accounts of exorcism given by the Apologists, most wonderful scenes these were. They saw continually the sublime spectacle of weak men and women bravely enduring the worst of tortures, yet scarcely feeling pain, and in their last breath praying for their murderers. Such scenes as these stood in the place of ritual to the Christian Church; they appealed to Heathen and Christian alike; they were a great source of increase to the Christian body; they stood in the place of imposing services, and when they ceased, the latter took their rise. Two only of the Apologists speak of the Christian ceremonies at any length, and they speak

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 32. Lact. Div. Inst. v. 19; vi. 9.

with different objects. Justin describes them to shew that the Christian assemblies were not those scenes of immorality which they were asserted to be ; Tertullian, to shew that the Christian society had none of the characteristics of a faction. <sup>1</sup> Justin gives an account of the ritual used at the two sacraments. There is first the admission of the convert into the Church, his new birth by the baptism of water for the remission of sins, the hearty thanksgiving that he is regenerate, the prayer that he and all might be saved with an everlasting salvation, and then the service is ended by the kiss of peace. Next comes the celebration of the Eucharist. The oblation of the elements—the bread and the wine mixed with water—the prayer of thanksgiving and consecration said by the president, to which the people say, Amen ; and then the reception of the consecrated elements from the hands of the deacons, a reservation being made for those who are absent. <sup>2</sup> “Not as common bread and common wine, says Justin, do we receive these ; but, as by the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh, and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His Word .....is both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” The memorial part of the service and the collection of alms followed. <sup>3</sup> Justin also gives a rationale of the Sunday services, which commenced with readings from the records of the Apostles or the

<sup>1</sup> i. Apol. c. 61, 65, 66, 67.<sup>2</sup> c. 66.<sup>3</sup> c. 67.

writings of the Prophets. <sup>1</sup> Tertullian, as usual, goes less into particulars, and with better judgment gives a more general and external view of the Christian ceremonies. The Christians meet together that by offering up united prayer they may wrestle with God. They pray for the emperors, and for all in authority, and for the welfare of the world. The Sacred Scriptures are read, exhortations made, rebukes and sacred censures administered, and the voluntary gifts collected to supply the wants of the poor and the distressed. The love-feast, a modest meal, with no excess, an act of religious service, is celebrated ; it is commenced with prayer, and ends with prayers and hymns. Such a meeting as this, Tertullian thinks ought not to be called a faction, but a curia, a sacred meeting.

Such is the Apologetic description of the Christian doctrines, evidences, and ceremonies. Bearing in mind, once more, the incidental character of their introduction, we may be surprised rather at the fulness than at the incompleteness of the information given us.

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 39.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GREEK APOLOGISTS.

WE pass on from discussing the Apologies, as a whole, to investigating the peculiar character of each, for each has characteristics of its own which will repay examination.

The earliest Apologies are not now extant. Quadratus and Aristides, as we learn from <sup>1</sup> Eusebius, presented defences of the faith to the Emperor Hadrian. We have especial reason to regret the loss of the Apology of the former. Eusebius sees evident proofs in it both of the understanding of the man, and of his Apostolic faith. The fragment he preserves is very important; it shews that Quadratus was able to distinguish between the miracles of Christ, and those, real or pretended, worked by others; and this was a distinction not clearly perceived by Christians of his own, or later times. The writer, moreover, was able to appeal to those who had been the objects of the miraculous powers of Christ. "Some of them," he says, "have also lived to our times."

<sup>2</sup> From Jerome we learn that both of these Apologies

<sup>1</sup> Ecc. Hist. iv. 3.    <sup>2</sup> De Vir. Ill. c. 19, 20.

were presented to Hadrian, when he spent the winter at Athens, and was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries.

The dialogue of Papiscus and Jason, written by Aristo, of Pella, is the next Apologetic document of which we have any record. It is mentioned by <sup>1</sup> Celsus, and he describes it as not worthy of refutation. Origen had a different opinion of it. From his description, it seems to have been a defence of Christianity against the Jews, deduced from the exact fulfilment, in Christ, of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

### § 1. JUSTIN MARTYR.

The earliest extant Apologies are those of Justin Martyr. <sup>2</sup> The first is addressed to Antoninus Pius, his colleagues, the sacred Senate, and the whole people of the Romans. <sup>3</sup> He calls it an address and petition on behalf of those of all nations who are unjustly hated and wantonly abused, myself being one of them. <sup>4</sup> The object of it is that the Christians may not be condemned unheard. He claims as a right that their mere name should not be a sufficient accusation against them.

<sup>5</sup> The charges he mentions as brought against the Christians are Atheism and Immorality; there <sup>6</sup> is only a slight hint of any political charge.

<sup>7</sup> The first charge he denies. Although Atheists

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, iv. 52.      <sup>2</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 1.      <sup>3</sup> c. 1.

<sup>4</sup> c. 2—4.      <sup>5</sup> c. 4, 5.      <sup>6</sup> c. 11.      <sup>7</sup> c. 6.



with respect to the demons, the Christians have a God whom they serve. <sup>1</sup> Him they worship, not with sacrifices and libations, but by imitating the divine virtues. <sup>2</sup> Him they serve, because they desire to live with Him in His kingdom, because they fear everlasting fire. <sup>3</sup> And as this system of rewards and punishments is divine, and therefore perfect, it necessarily has a much greater influence on their conduct than any human and imperfect system.

<sup>4</sup> He then gives the source of their teaching. Their doctrine has been taught them by the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who was born for this purpose, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judæa, in the times of Tiberius Cæsar. <sup>5</sup> The moral effect of His teaching is such that the unchaste become chaste, magical arts are neglected, wealth is despised, enemies become friends. And this effect springs directly from His teaching, for this change of life is only the carrying into practice the precepts of Christ. He taught them to be chaste even in thought; to love even their enemies; to lay up treasure in heaven, and not on earth; to be patient under injuries; to swear not at all. His system is such a practical one that it is not believing a certain set of opinions, but acting them out in the life, which constitutes a Christian. He taught them also to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, so that they are necessarily obedient subjects. All

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 10, 13.    <sup>2</sup> c. 8.    <sup>3</sup> c. 12.    <sup>4</sup> c. 13.

<sup>5</sup> c. 15—17.

these precepts the Christians are daily carrying out, and if any break them, then they cease, *ipso facto*, to be Christians, and will be deservedly punished.

<sup>1</sup> He then endeavours to show that the doctrines of Christians—the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the incarnation of the Deity—are not, *a priori*, incredible to a heathen, for his own mythology contains similar doctrines. It is not, however, on this account that the Christian doctrines are received; and he then states his general argument.

<sup>2</sup> He has three points which he wishes to prove.

(1.) That the Christian doctrines, viz., the doctrines taught by Christ and the Prophets, are alone true, and that their claims are to be rested on their truth, not on their analogies to heathen doctrines.

(2.) That Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and the Teacher of the human race.

(3.) That before His Incarnation, the demons, by the instrumentality of the poets, related beforehand, as having already happened, the facts of His life.

<sup>3</sup> To prove the first point, Justin first of all remarks, that the heathen themselves are at variance as to the proper objects of worship. Some of them worship lifeless objects; some irrational animals; and the things which some esteem gods, others esteem wild beasts. If any one goes back to their ancient mythology, he finds

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 19—22.      <sup>2</sup> c. 23.      <sup>3</sup> c. 24, 25.

their gods perpetrating crimes too base for men to mention: those cannot be gods who are slaves to human passions. <sup>1</sup> To come later down, the heathen have esteemed even magicians worthy of divine honours. <sup>2</sup> The practical result of these doctrines is, that they expose their children, or rear them for shameful uses; that immorality and unnatural crimes are legalised, and that crimes are perpetrated under the title of religious mysteries. Surely, a religion so uncertain in its objects of worship, whose gods are so despicable, either from their vices or from their weakness, whose votaries lead such immoral lives, cannot but be false. <sup>3</sup> Him whom the heathen esteem a god, the Christians call the devil, who will hereafter be sent, along with his worshippers, to eternal punishment. This punishment has been delayed simply because of God's regard for the human race. <sup>4</sup> The Christians, on the other hand, live continently; they worship a God who delights in virtue, who made the human race with the power of thought, and choosing the truth, and doing what is right.

<sup>5</sup> To prove the second, Justin meets, at the outset, the objection that Christ worked His wonderful works by magical art, and thus appeared to be the Son of God. The Christ of prophecy can have been no magician. <sup>6</sup> The books which tell of Him are no cunningly devised fables, framed after the event; they were translated for

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 26.

<sup>2</sup> c. 27.

<sup>3</sup> c. 28.

<sup>4</sup> c. 29.

<sup>5</sup> c. 30

<sup>6</sup> c. 31.

a heathen king hundreds of years before that He of whom they spoke appeared upon earth. They do not exist in rare copies, but are in the possession of all Jews throughout the world. They are not the longings of one mind, and one age, but in the succession of generations during 5,000 years, prophets after prophets arose. <sup>1</sup> They are no ambiguous oracles, giving doubtful and shadowy information, but they tell of his age, nation, tribe, miraculous conception, place of birth, miraculous powers, character, and death, together with numerous circumstances of His life. It is not isolated expressions, on which coincidences might be hung, which point to Him, but whole <sup>2</sup> chapters together. No man before Him has ever realized the predictions, for they foreshadow one who should be more than man. <sup>3</sup> It must not, however, be supposed, that "whatever happens, happens by a fatal necessity, because it is foretold as known beforehand." The balancings of a man between good and evil, and the very existence of good and evil prove this. The same Spirit, which foretold future events, thus taught,—“Behold, before thy face are good and evil; choose the good.” It was not to be believed that men who lived before the birth of Christ were left without instruction. The coming Word cast its light before it, and shone on all races of men, as well on Barbarian as on Greek, on Socrates as on Abraham.

As independent evidence of the fulfilment of pro-

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 32—41.

<sup>2</sup> c. 50.

<sup>3</sup> c. 43, 44.

phcey, <sup>1</sup> Justin adduces the case of the Jews. The desolation of Jerusalem was prophesied, and this very day it is guarded, lest anyone dwell in it. <sup>2</sup> All prophecy is not as yet fulfilled; but the past fulfilments are an earnest of the future; the First Advent is an earnest of the Second. <sup>3</sup> It was not to the Jews alone that Christ came. He was no local national deliverer, but one whom the prophets declare will have more followers among the Gentiles than among the Jews.

<sup>4</sup> To prove the third point, Justin brings forward the legend of Bacchus, the horse of Bellerophon, the strength of Hercules, the miracles of Æsculapius, and the works of <sup>5</sup> Plato, in which he sees manifest plagiarisms from the sacred writers. <sup>6</sup> One thing, however, the demons did not understand, and that was the Crucifixion; and yet the form of the cross lies at the basis of all things in the world. <sup>7</sup> The devils, moreover, were not satisfied with anticipating the Incarnation; after it, they made false Christs arise, by which many, and, among others, the Roman Senate, were deceived. <sup>8</sup> They were not satisfied with setting up rivals to Christ, but they persecute his followers and corrupt them. It cannot be said that Justin's arguments in support of his third point are worthy of the name.

<sup>9</sup> As the Christian assemblies had been asserted

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 47.    <sup>2</sup> c. 52.    <sup>3</sup> c. 53.    <sup>4</sup> c. 54.  
<sup>5</sup> c. 59, 60.    <sup>6</sup> c. 55.    <sup>7</sup> c. 56, 58.    <sup>8</sup> c. 57, 58.    <sup>9</sup> c. 61, 62, 65—67;  
 Cf. chap. iv. p. 97.



to be immoral, he then gives a simple account of the administration of their sacraments, and <sup>1</sup> he concludes by appealing to the Emperor to act as his father Hadrian had done, and this, not because Hadrian had so acted, but on the ground of justice.

Justin mixes up separate points in his argument. It is difficult to see whether he endeavours to prove that the Scriptures are true, because their predictions are fulfilled in Christ; or that Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, because He is the subject of prediction in the prophets.

<sup>2</sup> Justin's second Apology was occasioned by a case of persecution, which he narrates at length, and the whole work is an appeal against persecution in general. <sup>3</sup> He traces it to the influences of the demons; <sup>4</sup> he shows how all who have lived *μετὰ λόγου* have been persecuted, heathen as well as Christians. By their means, those who lived according to a part of the Word diffused amongst men, were persecuted, and, therefore, it is not wonderful that this should also be the case with those who live by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Word, which is Christ. <sup>5</sup> He appeals to the fortitude of the Christians, to shew that they are innocent of the crimes laid to their charge.

Justin's Dialogue with Trypho next demands our attention. It differs fundamentally in character from the other Apologies; it is a defence of Christianity

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 68.    <sup>2</sup> c. 1, 2.    <sup>3</sup> c. 8, 12.    <sup>4</sup> c. 7.  
<sup>5</sup> c. 11, 12. Cf. for Justin's Doctrine of the Seminal Word, c. iii. pp. 62, 63.



against the Jews, and it is based upon the prophecies of the Old Testament. It does not aim at proving that the Christians are worthy of toleration, but that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the Mosaic Law is abrogated.

In the introductory part of the work, we <sup>1</sup> have an interesting account of Justin's studies previous to his becoming a Christian, and of the circumstances of his conversion. <sup>2</sup> In the actual argument, Trypho admits the groundlessness of the charges of immorality brought against the Christians, and confesses the wonderful character of the precepts of the Gospel; so wonderful, indeed, that he suspects no man can keep them. <sup>3</sup> The objections that he brings against the Christians are, that although they profess to be so pious, they observe no festivals or sabbaths, do not practise the right of circumcision, and rest their hopes on a man who was crucified.

<sup>4</sup> Justin's argument in reply is,—that the Mosaic Law is now abrogated; that a new covenant has been made, as the prophets foretold; that righteousness does not consist in observing the Jewish rites, but in the circumcision of the foreskin of the heart, the baptism of the soul, the fast from sin, the purging oneself from the deeds of the old leaven. <sup>5</sup> He considers that the Mosaic Laws were instituted only because of the weakness and wickedness of the Jewish nation. Circumcision was a sign of separation from the rest of the

<sup>1</sup> Just. Dial. c. 2—8.      <sup>2</sup> c. 10.      <sup>3</sup> c. 10.      <sup>4</sup> c. 11—24.

<sup>5</sup> c. 19—22.

world, that so God's punishments might be inflicted on the Jews, and on them alone. They were enjoined to offer sacrifices to God, in order that they might not offer them to idols. They were commanded to abstain from certain meats, lest they should wax fat and kick. Sabbaths were instituted because of their unrighteousness, and the unrighteousness of their fathers. That the Jewish rites were not necessary to salvation, is proved by the fact, that they were not enjoined on any from Adam to Moses, and never on any but the Jews themselves. His remarks shew plainly enough, that in his days no one had conceived the notion of what is now called the Christian sabbath. He speaks of circumcision, sabbaths, and feasts, as alike enjoined, because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews, and as alike done away with in the new covenant. <sup>1</sup> When Trypho quotes against him the well known passage in Isaiah, lviii. 13, 14, concerning the sabbath, he replies, that the observance was re-enjoined by the Prophets for the same reason that it had originally been enjoined by Moses.

The remainder of the dialogue is mainly taken up with Justin's proofs,—

(1.) That Jesus is the Christ.

(2.) That Christ is God.

He rests his arguments entirely upon the prophecies of the Old Testament.

It is difficult for any one, with Western modes of

<sup>1</sup> Just. Dial. c. 27.

thought, to estimate the force with which Justin's arguments would fall upon one of his race, or time. His arguments never appear complete. There is always something wanting in the connection, at least to a matter-of-fact Western mind. One value seems to be set on resemblances, analogies, and direct prophecies. <sup>1</sup> What are we to say to a man who having asserted that the twelve bells which were attached to the robes of the high-priest were types of the twelve Apostles, goes on to remark,—“in short, Sirs, by enumerating all the other appointments of Moses, I can demonstrate that they were types, and symbols, and declarations, of those things which would happen to Christ, of those who it is foreknown were to believe in Him, and of those things which would also be done by Christ Himself.” One cannot help wondering whether Justin himself would not, at different times, have found that he obtained different results from his demonstrations.

It is in the connection of the abstract with the concrete,—of Him who should come, with Him who did come, that Justin fails. He gives some good arguments to prove the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, and of a plurality of <sup>2</sup> persons in the Godhead. He fails when he endeavours to show that the Jesus of history, is the Messiah of prophecy. He seems to start with the assumption that every sentence in the Old Testament may be severed from its context, and interpreted according to pleasure; and that any allusion or co-

<sup>1</sup> Just. Dial. c. 42.

<sup>2</sup> c. 56, 62.

incidence thus obtained, to the life, teaching, or nature of Jesus, proves either the passage to be a prophecy, or Jesus to be the Christ. The evidence for Christianity derived from prophecy is cumulative, and its importance can only be rightly estimated by considering it as a whole. Numerous fragments, in themselves weak, have to be combined together. The several agreements between the prediction and history, which when taken alone, might be assigned to extraordinary coincidences, or to the frauds of an imposter,—when viewed together, can only be explained by identifying Him of whom the Prophets spake, with Him of whom the memoirs of the Apostles bore witness. But there is perhaps no evidence for Christianity which requires more careful handling, such exact order and arrangement,—such elaborate attention to details, such discrimination in its use. It is then not to be wondered at that Justin failed. His powers were lamentably deficient for such a task. He was very inaccurate. The arrangement of his arguments is most faulty. His repetitions are constant, and he is continually wandering from one branch of the subject to another, and then turning back again, he re-states his old arguments. He is continually indebted to the Septuagint mistranslations for his arguments; in particular, <sup>1</sup> he uses several times their rendering of Isaiah, liii, 8. <sup>2</sup> He charges the Jews with mutilating the Scriptures, but without doubt unfairly: one of the passages he pro-

<sup>1</sup> Just. Dial. c. 32, 68, 76, 89.

<sup>2</sup> c. 71—73.

duces is found in our copies ; a second is probably an addition of some Christian,—of the other two nothing is known.

<sup>1</sup> The death upon the cross was the great stumbling block to Trypho. <sup>2</sup> He made no great difficulty in admitting the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, but he could not believe that he would be shamefully crucified. <sup>3</sup> It is impossible to suppose that his difficulties would in any way be removed by Justin's enumeration of those passages of the Old Testament in which he thought the Cross was typified ;—doubtful allusions, at the very best, they could have no argumentative force to an unbeliever. When confronted by the text, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," <sup>4</sup> Justin replies very differently to some in the present day. He allows that Christ was cursed, not, however, by God, but by the Jews, who cursed both Him and those that believed on Him.

As a defence of Christianity against the Jews, Justin's dialogue with Trypho, is of little value to us. Its chief value consists in the view it gives of the principles of interpretation, prevalent at the time, and apparently acquiesced in by Trypho : and in the testimony it gives that the story of Christ's life, then current, was substantially the same as that contained in the Gospels. It is obvious that a work like this has very little in common with the other Apologies.

## § 2. APOLOGETIC WORKS ASCRIBED TO JUSTIN.

Three other works of an Apologetic character have been ascribed to Justin. The Discourse to the Greeks, the Hortatory Address to the Greeks, and the Epistle to Diognetus. The first is a very short treatise, to show that the author's separation from Greek customs is not unreasonable and unthinking; the reasons he gives are the impurity and folly of the Greek mythology; and the immorality of the Greeks themselves.

The Hortatory Address to the Greeks is a work of more pretentious character.

The Author endeavours to prove five things.

- <sup>1</sup> (1.) That the heathen poets are unfit to be teachers of religion.
- <sup>2</sup> (2.) That the heathen philosophers, from Thales to Plato and Aristotle, held opinions not only contradicting one another, but self-contradictory; so that no satisfactory system can be derived from them.
- <sup>3</sup> (3.) The antiquity, inspiration, and harmony of Christian teachers.
- <sup>4</sup> (4.) That the heathen themselves furnish testimonies to monotheism.
- <sup>5</sup> (5.) That Plato and Homer borrowed from Moses and the Prophets.

<sup>1</sup> Just. Hort. c. 2      <sup>2</sup> c. 3, 7, 20, 22, 23.      <sup>3</sup> c. 8—14.

<sup>4</sup> c. 15—20.      <sup>5</sup> c. 26—34.



The author certainly views philosophy in a different light to Justin in his Apologies. The doctrine of the Seminal Word is never mentioned by him. The heathen writers borrow from the Jewish, but they are not themselves inspired. <sup>1</sup> In the Apologies, Socrates is wise, because in him the Seminal Word dwelt. In the Hortatory Address he is the wisest of men, and yet he has only arrived at the first step in knowledge—the knowledge of his own ignorance. In the Apology, the glimmerings of truth in Plato's mind are dwelt upon. <sup>2</sup> In the Hortatory Address, only his inconsistencies and his plagiarisms.

<sup>3</sup> The writer was certainly a credulous man, for he affirms that he saw with his own eyes the small buildings which the LXX. used when engaged in translating the Old Testament, and he was thoroughly convinced of the inspiration of the translators.

Though he endeavours to shew, at much greater length than Justin, that the Heathen writers borrowed from the Scriptures, he cannot be said to be any more successful; the resemblances he produces are very slight.

<sup>4</sup> He makes special use of the words of the Sibyl, as predicting the Advent of Christ in a clear and patent manner, and he recommends the Greeks to examine them, as a preparatory training for the study of the Sacred Writings.

<sup>1</sup> i. Just. Apol. c. 36.    <sup>2</sup> Just. Hort. c. 7. 20, 22, 23.    <sup>3</sup> c. 13.

<sup>4</sup> c. 37, 38.

This Apology differs from the other Apologies of the first three centuries. It is not a defence of Christians from accusations, but a defence of Christianity and an attack on Heathenism ; or rather a comparison of the Sacred Writings with the writings of philosophers and poets, shewing the infinite superiority of the one to the other. There is little of distinctively Christian doctrine in this work. There are <sup>1</sup> references to the λόγος, and to the Holy Spirit, but it is not till the last chapter that there is any allusion to Jesus Christ and His personal work on earth ; and here again we find a distinction between the writer and Justin.

The epistle to Diognetus, though not Apologetic in its aim, is Apologetic in its character, and must not be passed over without notice, more especially as it presents peculiar features. The work is anonymous, but it has generally been ascribed to Justin. External evidence is absolutely silent as to the authorship ; <sup>2</sup> but the internal evidence is opposed to this hypothesis. The author's conceptions of the relations of Christianity to Heathenism, Judaism, and Philosophy, are different from those of Justin. No satisfactory reasons have been given for ascribing it to any other author, and the question must be left undecided.

<sup>3</sup> The occasion of the letter was as follows :—A person, called Diognetus, had been exceedingly struck by observing how completely the Christians looked down

<sup>1</sup> Just. Hort. c. 15, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Westcott, Canon of N. T. p. 74 and note.

<sup>3</sup> c. 1.

upon the world and despised death ; and he was, in consequence, desirous to know the reasons for such strange conduct ; what the nature of Christianity was—its differences from Heathenism and Judaism—the bond which bound the Christians together—and the reason why this new institution had only lately entered into the world. The author cordially welcomes this desire, and prays God that he may speak to edification.

The author is not a man to comprehend or make allowances for the religious opinions of those who differ from him ; not even Tertullian represents Christianity in so isolated a position with respect to other systems as he. <sup>1</sup> The gods of the heathen are mere wood and stone. The images are not representations of the gods, but the gods themselves. <sup>2</sup> The worship of the Jews, though addressed to the true God, is intense folly. God has no need of sacrifices and burnt offerings, nor are they acceptable to Him. Observation of times, scrupulosity concerning meats, and the rite of circumcision, are utterly ridiculous and unworthy of notice. There is no trace of any idea in the mind of the writer that Judaism had a divine origin. He places the ceremonies of the Jews and the religions of the Heathen on exactly the same footing ; the one is a senseless worship, and the other is a worship of senseless things. <sup>3</sup> Nor, again, does he find anything to admire in the Philosophers ; their doctrines are vain and silly, their “ declarations are simply the startling and erroneous

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Diognetum c. 2.

<sup>2</sup> c. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> c. 8.

utterances of deceivers." No man at all understood, before Christ's coming, what God is. <sup>1</sup> Nor does He believe that God, by His dealings with men, had been preparing them for the Incarnation of His Son. On the contrary, the only preparation was, that men were left to themselves ; that sin was allowed full scope, that it might appear unutterably sinful. The world was left in complete darkness, that when the Light came the contrast might be greater. The fulness of time arrived when the iniquity of the earth was full. When man had despaired of attaining life by himself, then, in the goodness of God, it was vouchsafed him by the revealing of the Saviour.

<sup>2</sup> But if the author of this Epistle has narrow and partial views with respect to all other religions, he has a wide view of Christianity, and its relations to the world. "As the soul is in the body, so are the Christians in the world." Christianity does not benefit the Christians only, it benefits the whole human race. "The soul is imprisoned in the body, and yet preserves that very body ; and Christians are confined in the world, as in a prison, yet they are the preservers of the world." The Christians have a noble mission to fulfil. They are in the world, but not of it. "They are distinguished from other men neither by country, language, nor customs ;" and yet "they display their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land

<sup>1</sup> Ep. ad Diognetum c. 9.

<sup>2</sup> c. 6.

of their birth as a land of strangers. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned ; they are put to death, and restored to life ; they are poor, yet make many rich ; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all ; they are dishonoured, and yet, in their very dishonour, are glorified ; they are evil spoken of, and yet are justified ; they are reviled, and bless ; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour ; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers."

The author speaks of the foundation of Christianity in a manner differing from the Apologists. *They* based their Christianity on the historical Christ and His words, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived the life of a man upon this earth, and suffered under Pontius Pilate. *He* makes no allusions to the events of Christ's life, or to His discourses. He never speaks of Him as the Christ or Jesus, but as the abstract Saviour, or Son of God, who was sent by God to men, to reveal God to men. He says nothing which shews that he even believed in the true humanity of Christ. Again, with the other Apologists, Christ is the Christ of Prophecy ; but he never refers to the writings of the Old Testament, nor could he consistently with himself believe in their inspiration. If we compare him with Justin,—the man who believed that in many parts and in divers ways God had been revealing Himself to mankind,—the man who could find all the facts and

doctrines of Christianity in the Old Testament Scriptures, we wonder that the two could ever have been identified.

Like the *λόγος προτρεπτικός* of Clement, this letter is rather an Exhortation than an Apology. It makes no allusion to the charges brought against the Christians, nor does it furnish any evidence for the truth of Christianity, except that which may be found in a statement of its nature, and in the character of those who believed in it.

<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the letter, as we have it, consists of two parts, without any connection with each other.

### § 3. TATIAN.

The address to the Greeks, written by Tatian, a <sup>2</sup>disciple of Justin, must next be examined. It is one of the peculiar features of this work that it has only a few references to the charges brought against the Christians. He says it is unreasonable that the Christians should be assailed with abuse on a <sup>3</sup>judgment formed without examination. The Christians are charged with being <sup>4</sup>“the vilest of mankind,” but it is not they who eat <sup>5</sup>human flesh. They are denounced as impious, but inconsistently, by men who held in their hands the opinions of Apion concerning the Egyptian gods. <sup>6</sup>When he asks with what reason the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Westcott, Canon of N. T., p. 74—79.

<sup>2</sup> Iren. adv. Hær, i. 28. Hipp. Ref. Hær. viii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 27.    <sup>4</sup> c. 25.    <sup>5</sup> c. 27.    <sup>6</sup> c. 4.



civil powers are brought into collision with the Christians, he employs language which shews that the charges of impiety were used on such occasions. <sup>1</sup> He appeals against persecution, which, from incidental expressions, we may see was prevalent in his day. <sup>2</sup> "Even though fire," he says, "destroys all traces of my flesh, the world receives the vaporised matter; and though dispersed through rivers and seas, or torn in pieces by wild beasts, I am laid up in the storehouses of a wealthy Lord."

Tatian's address is not, however, a defence of the Christians against accusation or persecution, <sup>3</sup> but an exposure of the Grecian mythology and philosophy, <sup>4</sup> and a minute chronological proof, derived from heathen sources, of the superior antiquity of Moses to any of the heathen writers; it is the reasonableness and wisdom of conduct of the Christians in forsaking their old religion which he wishes to vindicate. <sup>5</sup> He speaks as a disciple of the Barbaric Philosophy; the Christians' writings are barbaric writings; Moses is the founder of the Barbaric, as Homer is of the Grecian wisdom. He traces all evil, and all the false systems, to the power of the demons over the nature of man; man's nature is material, and his will is free. <sup>6</sup> "Our free will," he says, "has destroyed us; we, who were free, have become slaves; we have been sold through sin." <sup>7</sup> Through matter, the demons have power over man;

<sup>1</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 6, 19, 27.      <sup>2</sup> c. 6.      <sup>3</sup> c. 8—10, 16—27.

<sup>4</sup> c. 36—42.      <sup>5</sup> c. 29, 31, 35, 42.      <sup>6</sup> c. 11.      <sup>7</sup> c. 16.

“they make war by means of the lower matter, against the matter that is like themselves.” “Should any wish to conquer them, let him repudiate matter.”

Tatian was a monotheist before he became a Christian. <sup>1</sup> The declaration of the government of the universe, as centred in one Being, was one of the causes which led him to put faith in the sacred writings. The Grecian religion is to him specially hateful in its character of a polytheism, which he feels to be at its very core. <sup>2</sup> There is no unity of character running through the Pantheon; the several gods cannot be taken as personifications of particular qualities, which can be combined into a harmonious whole; they represent contradictory instincts, and have no coherence. Tatian was not only a believer in the unity of God, but he was also a lover of unity of creed. He longed for a system at unity in itself, speaking with authority and simplicity; and the Heathenism of his day was indefinite, inconsistent, multiform. <sup>3</sup> He held, as the corner-stone of his creed, the doctrine of the free will of man. He saw the heathen gods represented as subject to an irresistible fate, and he repudiated gods who were inferior in their nature to men.

<sup>4</sup> There are indications that Tatian before his conversion had been leading an immoral life;—this his cynicism, and his ultimate heresy in the opposite direction also tend to shew; <sup>5</sup> he specially, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 29. <sup>2</sup> c. 8, 19, 21. <sup>3</sup> c. 7, 9, 11. <sup>4</sup> c. 20, 22, 23, 30, 34.

<sup>5</sup> c. 8, 19, 22—25.

insists on the demoralising nature of Heathenism.

<sup>1</sup> Tatian rejected the Grecian philosophy on account of its arrogant, and unpractical, and indefinite nature ; and the vices, and errors, and quarrels of the philosophers. He speaks bitterly throughout his work ; even Christianity had not made him a happy man. He looks only with contempt and disgust on Heathenism and Philosophy ; <sup>2</sup> he does not acknowledge any truth in either. These feelings were not a consequence of his Christianity, but of his examination into Heathenism, and also probably of self-disgust. <sup>3</sup> Retiring by himself, he had sought how he might be able to discover the truth. “Whilst in this condition,” he says, “I happened to meet with certain barbaric writings, too old to be compared with the opinions of the Greeks, and too divine to be compared with their errors ; and I was led to put faith in these, by the unpretending cast of the language ; the inartificial character of the writers ; the foreknowledge displayed of future events ; the excellent quality of the precepts ; and the declaration of the government of the universe, as centred in one Being. And my soul, being taught of God, discerned that the former class of writings lead to condemnation, but that these put an end to the slavery that is in the world, and rescue us from a multiplicity of rulers, and ten thousand tyrants ; while they give us, not indeed what we had not before received, but what we had received, but were prevented

<sup>1</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 2. 3, 25—27, 32.

<sup>2</sup> c. 29.

<sup>3</sup> c. 29.

by error from retaining.” <sup>1</sup> He afterwards grounds the truth of Christian doctrine on its suitability for all.

Tatian wrote this work whilst in the communion of the Church ; Gnostic tendencies can, however, be traced in it. <sup>2</sup> He is speculative and mystical. He speculates on the tripartite nature of man, and the immortality of the soul. <sup>3</sup> He places a spirit in the stars ; a spirit in angels ; a spirit in plants and the waters ; a spirit in man ; a spirit in animals. <sup>4</sup> He ascribes all evil to matter ; all perfection in man to its repudiation. <sup>5</sup> The great object that man should aim at is, to be brought into union with the Divine Spirit, and this is the Gnostic way of contemplating redemption : on the other hand, there is no mention of Æons, or of a Demiurge in his work ;—<sup>6</sup> the λόγος begat our world, having first created for himself the necessary matter ;—so that he did not hold any dualistic opinions. <sup>7</sup> He believed in the resurrection of the body, <sup>8</sup> and made no distinctions between Christians,—the glory of Christianity is, that it is equally well calculated for all. It therefore cannot be said that Tatian’s Gnostic tendencies had, as yet, attained a high degree of development.

#### § 4. ATHENAGORAS.

The next Apology we shall comment on is that of Athenagoras, the Philosopher and Athenian. He

<sup>1</sup> Tat. Orat. c. 32.

<sup>2</sup> c. 12, 13, 15.

<sup>3</sup> c. 12.

<sup>4</sup> 16, 20.

<sup>5</sup> c. 15.

<sup>6</sup> c. 5.

<sup>7</sup> c. 6.

<sup>8</sup> c. 32.

addressed his *πρεσβεία* to the Emperors, "Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia, and more than all Philosophers." The plea of Athenagoras for the Christians is entitled to high praise. Athenagoras had a clear conception of the arguments likely to attain his end ; he knew how far to go, and when to stop ; there was no danger in attacking the heathen religion and mythology, in a work addressed to a Philosopher like Marcus Aurelius ; Philosophers before him had done the same thing,<sup>1</sup> and Athenagoras studiously endeavours to place the Christians on the same footing with them. He uses their writings to shew the reasonableness of Christian doctrine, and he is very sparing in his censure of them. On the other hand, he does not enter into minute discussions of Christian doctrines, or detailed accounts of Christian ceremonies, like Justin. He had one object in view,—to deliver the Christians from persecution, by clearing them from the charge of impiety and immorality ; and all his statements of Christian doctrine have reference to this. He does not attempt to prove that Christianity is true ; his object is simply to shew that it is reasonable, or even less, worthy of toleration. Athenagoras' arrangement is very good,—we have no digressions ; his arguments are elegantly, and, what is more to the point in an Apologist, moderately expressed. <sup>2</sup> He begins by asking for the Christian religion the same toleration which the Romans

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 2, 5, 6, 19, 23, 24.    <sup>2</sup> c. 1.



granted to national religions. <sup>1</sup> He claims that the Christians should have a fair trial; should not be condemned merely for their name, but should have the charges brought against them examined into, as the Philosophers have. <sup>2</sup> He states these charges to be Atheism, Thyestean feasts, Ædipodean intercourse. He frankly acknowledges that if they are made with truth, the Christians deserve extermination.

He examines first the charge of Atheism. He denies its truth. <sup>3</sup> The Christians distinguish God from matter, and have one God, whom they serve. <sup>4</sup> He justifies their doctrine of the unity of God, by the opinions of poets and philosophers. The <sup>5</sup> Christians do not offer material sacrifices to their God, for of these He has no need; to Him the noblest sacrifice is the acknowledgment of His power and providence. He allows that the Christians do not worship the gods of the heathen. He justifies this by—

(1.) <sup>6</sup> The absurdity of polytheism. From the nature of God, there cannot be more Gods than one.

(2.) <sup>7</sup> The morality of the Christians. None who did not believe that a God presides over the human race, would purge themselves from evil as they do.

(3.) The inconsistency of the Heathen. <sup>8</sup> The very men who charge the Christians with Atheism,

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol. c. 2.    <sup>2</sup> c. 3.    <sup>3</sup> c. 4.    <sup>4</sup> c. 5—7.    <sup>5</sup> c. 13.    <sup>6</sup> c. 8.

<sup>7</sup> c. 11, 12.    <sup>8</sup> c. 14.



for not admitting the same gods as they acknowledge, are not agreed amongst themselves concerning the gods.

- (4.) <sup>1</sup> The Christian distinction between God and matter.
- (5.) <sup>2</sup> The history of the gods.
- (6.) <sup>3</sup> The character of their images.
- (7.) <sup>4</sup> The nature of the beings who give the idols their power, viz., the demons.

He next defends the Christians against immorality, and on these grounds:—

- (1.) <sup>5</sup> Because the Christians believe in a God who is a witness to all they think and say.
- (2.) <sup>6</sup> Because the Christians believe in a future life, in the resurrection of the body, and in a judgment to come.
- (3.) <sup>7</sup> Because of the precepts of Christ, which command purity in thought as well as deed, and not only justice, but goodness.

We must notice one flaw in Athenagoras' reasoning. On one occasion he argues in a circle. <sup>8</sup> He uses the morality of the Christians to prove their belief in a God, and he uses their belief in a God to prove their morality.

Contemporaneous with Athenagoras were Melito, the bishop of Sardis, and Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis.

<sup>1</sup> Athen. Apol c. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> c. 17, 18, 21.

<sup>3</sup> c. 17, 20,

<sup>4</sup> c. 23—27.

<sup>5</sup> c. 31—36.

<sup>6</sup> c. 31, 36.

<sup>7</sup> c. 32—35.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. c. 11, 12, with c. 31.

<sup>1</sup> "Each of them," says Eusebius, "separately addressed discourses, as Apologies for the faith, to the existing Emperor of the Romans, already mentioned" (Marcus Aurelius.)

<sup>2</sup> Both these, with the exception of a few passages of the former, preserved in Eusebius, were supposed to be lost; but lately an oration to Antoninus Cæsar, by Melito, has been discovered in the Syriac language.

In the fragments preserved in Eusebius, he complains of "the shameless informers," who took occasion from the edicts of the Emperors openly to perpetrate robbery. He claims that inquiry should be made into the character of the Christians, and asserts that the prosperity of the Roman Empire is due to Christianity. This passage is not found in the oration above referred to, and it is doubtful whether it is the work to which Eusebius alludes.

### § 5. THEOPHILUS.

Hitherto all the Apologies have been of a public character, addressed to those in authority, or to nations at large. The Apology we now notice is of a private character. It consists of three letters, written by Theophilus bishop of Antioch, to Autolycus a heathen.<sup>3</sup> Certain statements which Autolycus had made were the occasion of these letters; he had boasted

<sup>1</sup> Hist. Eccl. iv. 26, 27.    <sup>2</sup> Hist. Eccl. iv. 26.    <sup>3</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. i. 1.

of the Gods whom he worshipped, and he had called Theophilus a Christian, as if the name itself were a sufficient accusation.

These letters have a different object from the rest of the Apologies. They are intended to remove *a priori* objections against Christianity from the mind of Autolycus, and to induce him to study the Sacred Scriptures; they are not intended as defences of the Christians. Theophilus does indeed deny the truth of the charges of immorality brought against them,<sup>1</sup> but his object is to remove a scandal from Christianity which had been presented to Autolycus' mind.<sup>2</sup> These letters are quite of an elementary nature, as Eusebius says. We find in them no more complete statement of Christian doctrine than in Athenagoras.

<sup>3</sup> Theophilus thinks it is of no use to address his argument to an unenlightened reason, or a reprobate mind; he declares that God is seen by those only who are enabled to see him, and that where there is sin in a man he cannot behold God.

The first letter is devoted to a comparison of the gods of the Heathen with the God of the Christians. He dwells on the incomprehensible and indescribable nature of the Christian God.<sup>4</sup> He shews how, if a name be given to Him, it does but express one part of His attributes or offices.<sup>5</sup> A knowledge of Him may be obtained from His works, but only a partial knowledge,

<sup>1</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 4.  
Autol. i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ecc. Hist. iv. 24.  
<sup>4</sup> c. 3.    <sup>5</sup> c. 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Theoph. ad

for man, who, along with the whole creation, is enclosed by the hand of God, cannot behold Him. <sup>1</sup> A time, however, will come, when man will behold Him, when he puts off the mortal, and puts on incorruption. <sup>2</sup> He passes from the Christian doctrine respecting God to the doctrine of the resurrection. This he shews is probable from the analogy of nature. <sup>3</sup> He then describes the nature of the heathen objects of worship. He remarks on the immorality of the history of the gods, which he considers only a collection of stories of men who are now dead. <sup>4</sup> The Grecian religion appears to him to consist merely in the worship of wood and stone, and other material substances. <sup>5</sup> He says very little of the demons, in comparison with the other Apologists; he seems to have supposed that they inspired the heathen writers, rather than that they were themselves the heathen gods.

<sup>6</sup> He makes a few remarks which shew that the charge of refusing to worship the Emperor, and swear by his genius, which was a prominent one in later times, was already beginning to be made. He distinguishes between the worship due to God and the reverence due to a king.

<sup>7</sup> With the exception of a few observations about the gods at the beginning of the second book, <sup>8</sup> and two chapters on the accusations made against the Christians in the third book, the remaining two letters are

<sup>1</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> i. 8, 13.

<sup>3</sup> i. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> c. 1.

<sup>5</sup> i. 10. ii. 2.

<sup>6</sup> i. 11.

<sup>7</sup> ii. 2, 3.

<sup>8</sup> iii. 4, 15.

completely taken up by a comparison of the Sacred Scriptures with the writings of the Philosophers and Poets.

<sup>1</sup> He discusses the opinion of the latter concerning God and the origin of things. <sup>2</sup> He considers that "all the authors and poets, and those called philosophers, were wholly deceived." "They spake by conjecture and human conception, and not knowing the truth." "Inspired by demons, and puffed up by them, they spake at their instance whatever they said." "Sometimes," however, "some of them wakened up in soul, and that they might be for a witness both to themselves and to all men, uttered things in harmony with the prophets regarding the monarchy of God, and the judgment, and such like."

<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, "men of God, carrying in them a holy spirit, and becoming prophets, being inspired and made wise by God, became God-taught, and holy and righteous. Wherefore, they were also deemed worthy of receiving this reward, that they should become instruments of God, and contain the wisdom that is from Him, through which wisdom they uttered both what regarded the creation of the world, and all other things. For they predicted also pestilences, and famines, and wars. And there were not one, or two, but many, at various times and seasons, amongst the Hebrews; and also amongst the Greeks there was the Sibyl; and they have all spoken things consistent and

<sup>1</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. ii. 4—8.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> ii. 9.

harmonious with each other, both what happened before them, and what happened in their own time, and what is now being fulfilled in our own day ; wherefore we are persuaded also concerning the future things that they will fall out, as also the first have been accomplished."

<sup>1</sup> To prove the above he gives at great length, with frequent allegorical interpretations, the history of the six days of creation, and of the human race up to the time of the confusion of tongues. <sup>2</sup> He also sets forth, in detail, the moral teaching of the prophets, and contrasts it with that of the Philosophers. <sup>3</sup> He dwells on the accuracy and antiquity of the sacred writings, as compared with the uncertain conjectures and late date of the Philosophers. <sup>4</sup> He gives testimonies of the Poets and Philosophers, confirmatory of the teaching of the Hebrew prophets ; but doubts whether their evidence was willingly given.

To sum up, Theophilus found the superiority of the Sacred Scriptures over the writings of the heathen Poets and Philosophers, not in the predictions the former contain, but in their exclusive knowledge of early, and their more accurate information concerning later, times ; in the morality of their teaching, and in their antiquity, harmony, and consistency. In his account of the creation of the world Theophilus is very prone to fanciful interpretations ; and, as these were not required by the plan of his work, they would have been much better

<sup>1</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. ii. 9—32.    <sup>2</sup> ii. 34, 35 ; iii. 5—14.    <sup>3</sup> iii. 16—30.

<sup>4</sup> ii. 37, 38.



omitted. Otherwise, the work is well calculated to induce a thoughtful pagan to give careful attention to the study of the Scriptures. <sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that one so well read in heathen literature, and so intelligent in arguing for his religion, should nevertheless have been so credulous as to believe that the remains of the ark were still to be seen on the Arabian mountains. <sup>2</sup> He gives more prominence to the Sibyl, than even the other Christian writers ; placing her on an equality with the Hebrew prophets.

#### § 6. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

The *λόγος προτρεπτικός* of Clement of Alexandria, differs materially from the other Apologetic writings of the first three centuries. <sup>3</sup> In that part of his work, indeed, in which he attacks heathenism, he passes over much the same ground as the other Apologists. <sup>4</sup> He exposes heathenism by an examination of the heathen mythology, the heathen mysteries, and the heathen images ; shewing their shamefulness, cruelty, and immorality. He does not use any abstract arguments ; <sup>5</sup> he says very little against the Philosophers ; he uses them to bear witness to the truth, and he believes that into them, as into all men, especially those who are occupied with intellectual pursuits, a certain divine effluence has been instilled.

<sup>1</sup> Theoph. ad Autol. iii. 19.    <sup>2</sup> ii. 9, 36.    <sup>3</sup> Clement. Cohort. c. 1—4.

<sup>4</sup> c. 1—4.    <sup>5</sup> c. 5.

It is when we come to his defence of Christianity, if we may call it such, that we find ourselves on entirely new ground. He <sup>1</sup> says a few words concerning the simplicity of the Divine Scriptures, and he asserts that they form the short road to salvation ; but he does not find in their character an evidence for Christianity ; it is on the benefits which Christianity has given, <sup>2</sup> and the light which it has diffused on creation ;—the salvation which it has offered to the world—the immortality which it has promised to the soul, that he rests its cause. Christianity is to Clement a gift so plainly worthy of acceptation, that men must be senseless if they forget it. <sup>3</sup> “Why,” he asks, “do we delay ? Why do we not shun the punishment ? Why do we not receive the free gift ? Why, in fine, do we not choose the better part—God, instead of the evil one ; and prefer wisdom to idolatry ; and take life in exchange for death ?” All these blessings have come to the world by the Incarnation of the Divine Word. <sup>4</sup> He is the Divine Light which lightens the world ; <sup>5</sup> the Divine Song which makes the whole world harmony. <sup>6</sup> When Clement quotes from the writings of the prophets, he does not insist so much on the abstract nature of God, as on God in his relation to mankind ; and considering the tendencies of his school of thought to abstract speculation, this fact is not a little remarkable. His object is to shew to the heathen world that God is the fount of all the wisdom and happiness

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Cohort. c. 8.    <sup>2</sup> c. 1.    <sup>3</sup> c. 10.    <sup>4</sup> c. 1.    <sup>5</sup> c. 9.    <sup>6</sup> c. 8.

of men ; and that He freely bestows life and instruction on those who will accept the gifts. Equally practical is his teaching as to the way in which man obtains immortality :—it was not by repudiation of the *ῥλή* or by acquisition of *γνῶσις*, but simply by faith and purity. It was not by leaving the calling of life in which he was engaged that a man would attain to the knowledge of God, but by doing all to the Lord. <sup>1</sup> “Practice husbandry, he says, if you are a husbandman ; but while you till your fields, know God. Sail the sea, you who are devoted to navigation, yet call the while on the heavenly Pilot. Has knowledge taken hold of you while engaged in military service? Listen to the Commander, who orders what is right.

It is obvious that this mode of argument implies some knowledge of Christianity in those to whom it is addressed ; and some acquaintance with its historical basis. Assuming this, Clement finds his defence of, or rather his attraction to, Christianity, in the account it gives of an Infinite Being showering his blessings on the human race ; and of a God who became man, for the purpose of shedding light on the world. It is so beautiful, he seems to say, that it must be true.

It follows from the above, that whilst the *λόγος προτρεπτικὸς* is connected with the Apologies by its refutation of heathenism,—it is connected with the exhortations to enquirers on the Christian side ; that it is rather an invitation to individuals to become

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Cohort. c. 10.

Christians, than a defence of Christianity ; that it appeals quite as much to the heart, as to the head.

### § 7. ORIGEN.

Before proceeding to the Latin Apologists, we will consider the work of Origen against Celsus. This stands alone amongst early Christian Apologies ; it is not a defence of Christians, nor a general defence of Christianity, but a particular defence against a particular book ; a book apparently of some repute, as it was thought necessary to answer it seventy years after it was written. Celsus' attack was written circa 170—180 A.D., and Origen's defence at the end of the first half of the third century.

Celsus' book, entitled "The True Word," is not now extant, but large extracts of it exist in its refutation by Origen. It was Origen's plan to state Celsus' arguments one by one, and give a separate refutation of each, and we are, in consequence, enabled to get a general idea of the style of the work.<sup>1</sup> Celsus, in a considerable part of his work, assumed the position of a Jew, but this was only for argument's sake ; he was, according to <sup>2</sup> Origen, an Epicurean Philosopher, but <sup>3</sup> Neander gives reasons for supposing he was a Neo-Platonist.

His work derives its importance from the extent of

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, Bk. i. & ii.

<sup>2</sup> i. 8. iv. 36. <sup>3</sup> Church Hist. vol. i. p. 226.

his knowledge of the facts and doctrines of the Christian religion. He was well acquainted with the Gospel narrative, with the Old Testament Scriptures, and with many of the legends which popular rumour, the malice of the Jews, and the unrestrained imagination of the heretics, had invented concerning Christ and Christianity. His objections are not directed against Christianity, as a whole, but against particular points in it. He takes particular parts of the Gospel history, and endeavours to shew that they are incredible; and particular doctrines, that they are foolish and absurd. On examining his arguments, one is astonished that a man with so much superficial acquaintance with Christianity, had so little conception of its spirit. In consequence, he is without a clue to guide him, and wanders through a labyrinth of facts, and finds nothing but an inextricable confusion of falsehood and absurdity. He is like a blind man suddenly restored to sight, whose eye has not been practised in measuring distances or distinguishing colour; and to whom a beautiful landscape seems an overhanging cliff, and its tints a glare of tawdry colours. In part, this fault is due to the age. It has already been observed in the Apologists. In none of them, however, is this fault so prominent as in Celsus, for he was utterly unscrupulous, he was quite ignorant of the nature of Christianity, and from our knowledge of it, his faults appear the more glaring.

We find the ordinary accusations against the Christians in Celsus, but with this difference, that he traces

them home to the spirit of Christianity. <sup>1</sup> Thus, like others, he charges them with immorality, and this is natural enough, for they invite the worst of men to join their society. Christ only came to call sinners to repentance; <sup>2</sup> his first disciples were men of notorious character. <sup>3</sup> With foolishness and stupidity; and this, too, is the result of their doctrines, for they are continually saying, "Do not examine, but believe." "The wisdom of this life is bad, but foolishness is a good thing." <sup>4</sup> With impiety; and it is part of their belief to execrate the Creator of the world, who formerly placed the serpent under a curse for giving mankind the knowledge of good and evil. The two prominent charges which he brings against the Christians, and to which he refers again and again, are:—

<sup>5</sup> (1.) That the Christians are a foolish people, hating knowledge, and loving ignorance; drafted from the slaves, the women, the children, the poor, the ignorant, and the criminal.

<sup>6</sup> (2.) That it is impossible to tell what Christianity is, for the Christians are split up into parties. In the beginning, when they were few, they were all of one mind; now, when they are spread and increased, they are divided into parties, and each has his own faction.

<sup>7</sup> He evidently had not the slightest conception which party had the best right to the title of Christians; all

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, iii. 59, 64, 73, 74; vi. 27.    <sup>2</sup> i. 62, 63.    <sup>3</sup> i. 9, 13; iii. 44, 50, 52, 55.    <sup>4</sup> vi. 28.    <sup>5</sup> iii. 44, 59.    <sup>6</sup> iii. 10; v. 14, 63—65; vi. 11.    <sup>7</sup> v. 63—65; vi. 11.



were alike to him ; he uses indiscriminately heretical and Christian writings ; and Origen declines to be held accountable for opinions which he detested.

This work of Celsus, is, in the main, an attack on Christianity, not on Christians ; and it derives its importance from the acquaintance Celsus had with his subject. He had not, however, any conception of Christianity as a whole, and in consequence, he had no consistent plan of attack ; he shifts his ground continually ; and he takes any arguments he can find. He has several contradictory sources of information, and he avails himself of them, or throws them over as it suits him. <sup>1</sup> He is acquainted with the Gospel narratives, and thinks he can beat the Christians with their own weapons ; at one time he attacks Christianity through them ; at another he declares them to be interpolated, and denies their truth.

<sup>2</sup> He, at one time, uses Jewish tradition, and Jewish arguments to discredit Christianity ; at another, he calls the quarrel between Jew and Christian a quarrel concerning the shadow of an ass. <sup>3</sup> The Christian miracles are, at one time, mere inventions ; at another time, cunning semblances, due to magical power ; at another, true,—but surpassed by those worked at heathen shrines. He sometimes asserts that the Christian doctrines are false, sometimes that they are a plagiarism on the Philosophers. He attacks Christi-

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, ii. 27, 74 ; vii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Books, i. and ii.

<sup>3</sup> i. 6 ; ii. 55 ; iii. 26 ; vi. 39, 40 ; vii. 1 ; viii. 45.

anity for contradictory reasons ; <sup>1</sup> at one time the Christians have gross ideas of God,—they think he must be apprehended by the senses ; at another Christianity, unlike all other religions, has nothing in it which appeals to the senses ; <sup>2</sup> the Christians cannot endure the sight of temples, altars, and images. He leaves no stone unturned,—he scruples at nothing,—if he can but expose this hatred superstition,—so contrary to his philosophical spirit ;—so powerful amongst those whom he despised.

Celsus' attack, as we have said, consists of objections to Christianity as a history ; and it inevitably followed, that they should have especial reference to the life and character of Christ. Celsus has no appreciation of Christ's character. There was in Celsus' idea, no form nor comeliness in Him, nor any beauty that he should desire Him. <sup>3</sup> He sees illegitimacy in His birth from a virgin ; <sup>4</sup> and he rakes up a Jewish story about a soldier, Panthera. <sup>5</sup> In Christ's sojourn in Egypt, whilst he was a child, he sees an opportunity for Him to learn magical arts. There was <sup>6</sup> nothing in Christ's deeds that was truly great, or worthy of a God ;—<sup>7</sup> Christ's sufferings were only a proof of weakness ; <sup>8</sup> His denial and betrayal by His own followers, and His punishment as a Malefactor, were an utter refutation of His claims. <sup>9</sup> He does not even allow that Christ was

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, vii. 32.      <sup>2</sup> ii. 62.      <sup>3</sup> i. 28.      <sup>4</sup> i. 32.

<sup>5</sup> 1, 38.      <sup>6</sup> ii. 30, 31, 33.      <sup>7</sup> i. 54.      <sup>8</sup> ii. 9, 11, 20.

<sup>9</sup> ii. 35, 45.

a virtuous man. <sup>1</sup> He denies that He was free from all sin. <sup>2</sup> He declares that He went about getting His subsistence in a base and shameful manner. <sup>3</sup> He speaks of His ending an infamous life, with a miserable death.

Origen's defence necessarily took its form from the attack. He takes each statement of Celsus, and investigates it separately: he distinguishes between the Christians and the Heretics,—from confusing the two together, many of Celsus' charges had arisen. <sup>4</sup> He asserts the authenticity of the Gospels. <sup>5</sup> He clears Christian doctrines from misrepresentation. <sup>6</sup> He distinguishes between heathen and Christian miracles, the effects of magic, and the effects of divine power. <sup>7</sup> He points out the superiority of Christianity to Philosophy when they agree; and the superior antiquity of the prophets to the Philosophers. He exposes garbled statements and unfair arguments; and he endeavours <sup>8</sup> to prove the prophecies must have referred to Christ.

The differences in conception, however, between Origen and Celsus were fundamental; and much of the controversy turns on these. A saying, or deed, which, to the one, was noble, was, to the other, mean and despicable; and when definitions differ, there is not much room for argument. No one would suppose that Origen's arguments, if they could have been presented to the notice of Celsus, would have had the

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, ii. 41.

<sup>2</sup> i. 62.

<sup>3</sup> vii. 53.

<sup>4</sup> ii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> iii. 35; vii. 1.

<sup>6</sup> i. 68.

<sup>7</sup> vi. 1—11; vii. 60.

<sup>8</sup> 1, 34, 35, 51, 53. 54.

slightest effect upon him, he would have found just as much to cavil at as ever. They had too little in common, for either of them to influence the other.

The chief value of this work to us, is the important testimony it bears to the authenticity of the Gospel narrative. Celsus wrote less than 150 years after the death of Christ, and yet the Gospels were so well known as to be subjected to detailed criticism by an unbeliever; <sup>1</sup> and they are the acknowledged work of the disciples, that is, of the personal followers of Jesus. <sup>2</sup> There are plain references in Celsus' remarks to the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. John. <sup>3</sup> Origen supposed that Celsus was acquainted with all the four Gospels; it was not pretended that they were forgeries; <sup>4</sup> the Jew, whom Celsus uses, asserts that he could give a different account concerning the life of Jesus from that given by his disciples, but he refrains; and it is absurd to suppose that the unscrupulous Celsus would have hesitated to use any means in his power to contradict the Gospel narrative.

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Celsum, ii. 13.    <sup>2</sup> Cf. Lardner, vol. 2. p. 273.    <sup>3</sup> v. 56.

<sup>4</sup> i. 48; ii. 27.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LATIN APOLOGISTS.

THE list of Greek Apologists being complete we pass to writings of a different class, and different ideas, containing different accusations, and different defences. It is not to the Church of Rome that we must look for a defence of the faith,—she had her great gifts, but she was not learned, no early Christian writer of mark was immediately connected with her,—but to the African Church, so celebrated once, so utterly fallen now, which had so much to do in early times with the promotion of sound Christian learning. Without an exception the Latin Apologists were Africans.

#### § 1. TERTULLIAN.

The first Latin Apologist, in point of date, is the first in importance. Tertullian was the chief Latin Father, till S. Augustine's time. Amongst his numerous and voluminous treatises, there are four of an Apologetic nature, entitled respectively,—

1. Liber Apologeticus.
2. Ad Nationes.

3. *Ad Scapulam.*4. *De Testimonio Animæ.*

Of these, the first only requires attention here. The second is very little more than an adaptation of it for the general public. The "*Ad Scapulam*," is a warning appeal to a provincial governor against the course he is pursuing in persecuting the Christians. The argument from the testimony of the soul has been examined elsewhere.

The Apology is not addressed to the Roman Senate, but to the governors of proconsular Africa ; <sup>1</sup> the terms used in it imply a province governed by a Proconsul. It was written almost exactly at the commencement of the third century. <sup>2</sup> Before A.D. 202, and after A.D. 196, 197. Like most of the Apologies, it is a <sup>3</sup> plea for toleration, or, at least a plea that the Christians might not be condemned unheard. <sup>4</sup> Tertullian begins by objecting to the mode of procedure at the trials of the Christians. <sup>5</sup> The forms of law were not observed, they were not allowed to defend themselves, no enquiry was made into their crimes, torture was applied, not as to malefactors to make them confess, but, on the contrary, to make them deny. Technically, Tertullian's objection holds good ; the proceedings adopted could not be justified in theory, but at the same time, they were very politic. The magistrates were no doubt, well aware that the charges of immorality believed in by the populace, had no foundation in fact, or were at

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 2, 9, 50.    <sup>2</sup> c. 5, 35.    <sup>3</sup> c. 1.    <sup>4</sup> c. 1.    <sup>5</sup> c. 2.



least very difficult to prove ; they therefore pursued a simpler course ; they asked those brought before them whether they were Christians, if they acknowledged they were, out of their own mouth were they condemned ; they belonged to a *religio illicita*, they might at once be punished ; but there was no desire to be harsh ; the main object of the authorities was to prevent the illegal society from flourishing and spreading ; the torture was therefore applied, not as a punishment, but to force them to deny that they were Christians ; they knew that if they succeeded in their object, *ipso facto*, Christians no longer they were. <sup>1</sup> The simple question, is a man a Christian or not, being the question of the law courts, it followed as a consequence, that the title Christian summed up in one word all the reproaches and accusations which the hatred of the times had invented.<sup>2</sup> A good man is Caius Sejus, only he is a Christian," "I marvel that that wise man Lucius Titus hath suddenly become a Christian."

Proceeding from the trial to the accusation, <sup>3</sup> Tertullian is the first of the Apologists who goes fairly into the charge, that the Christians formed a body unrecognized by law. We shall not here repeat, as it has been given in another place, his argument under this head ; we shall only call attention to a remark he makes with reference <sup>4</sup> to an old law, that no God should be consecrated by the Emperor, till first approved by the

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 2.<sup>2</sup> c. 3.<sup>3</sup> c. 4.<sup>4</sup> c. 5.

Senate ; and we do this as illustrative of one of the characteristics of Tertullian, his recklessness in attack. <sup>1</sup> “And this too,” he says, “makes for our case, that among you, divinity is allotted at the judgment of human beings. Unless gods give satisfaction to men, there will be no deification for them, the god will have to propitiate the man.” Omitting the sarcastic gloss, we ask how otherwise it can be ? man must himself recognize the divinity of his object of worship, before he can give to it divine worship. Such a recognition of divinity can only arise from an examination of the evidence on which the claims rest ; when this is done, he decides whether the claims are true. Such evidence Tertullian would bring to prove the divinity of Christ, and on such evidence he himself had probably acted.

Tertullian is never contented with defence, he always retorts ; <sup>2</sup> he charges the men who professed so profound a respect for law in the case of the Christians, that they themselves did not keep the laws when opposed to their corruptions.

<sup>3</sup> Proceeding to the charges of immorality, Tertullian argues, first, that they rest, notwithstanding watches and surprises, on report only, — his second reason, curiously illustrates his method of arguing. <sup>4</sup> The charges he says, are intrinsically improbable ; human nature is incapable of such baseness. But defence does not satisfy him, <sup>5</sup> he retorts the charges against the heathen, and in so doing, overthrows his own argument.

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 5.      <sup>2</sup> c. 6.      <sup>3</sup> c. 7.      <sup>4</sup> c. 8.      <sup>5</sup> c. 9.

<sup>1</sup> He shews, in the third place, how the public life of the Christians gives the lie to the charge of private orgies. It was not likely that a man who would die rather than taste a pudding made of the blood of beasts, would pant for human blood:—that one who was so remarkably chaste in public, would in private practise unnatural lust.

Tertullian next proceeds to the Theological charge.

<sup>2</sup> The Christians do not worship the gods. He examines the nature of the gods; he shews that <sup>3</sup> they are neither gods by nature, <sup>4</sup> nor by the necessity of the case, nor by merit; what is more, the <sup>5</sup> Christians are not the only persons who are impious; the heathen are impious too; <sup>6</sup> they make a gain of their gods; <sup>7</sup> they offer diseased and dying animals to them; <sup>8</sup> they insult them <sup>9</sup> in their books, in the temples, at the shrines.

<sup>10</sup> After denying the truth of certain absurd stories, as to the object of the Christian worship, Tertullian describes the true object of their worship. <sup>11</sup> It is the one God, the Creator of all things, invisible, and incomprehensible, the true God because immensely great. To Him, His great and manifold works, and the simple soul of man, bear witness. Not these alone;—

<sup>12</sup> His written word also,—the writings of just men, on whom He poured His Spirit; <sup>13</sup> ancient writings, as the facts of history shew; <sup>14</sup> true, as the fulfilment of prophecy proves.

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 9.    <sup>2</sup> c. 10.    <sup>3</sup> c. 10.    <sup>4</sup> c. 11.    <sup>5</sup> c. 11.    <sup>6</sup> c. 12.  
<sup>7</sup> c. 14.    <sup>8</sup> c. 13.    <sup>9</sup> c. 15.    <sup>10</sup> c. 16.    <sup>11</sup> c. 17.  
<sup>12</sup> c. 18.    <sup>13</sup> c. 19.    <sup>14</sup> c. 20.

Up to this point, no Christian, as distinguished from Jewish, elements have been introduced ; <sup>1</sup> but now Tertullian states the fundamental distinction between Judaism and Christianity. The Jews consider Christ to be a mere man ; the Christians believe him to be God. <sup>2</sup> He describes the nature of Christ's divinity. He is of one substance with, but subordinate in order to, the Father. The proof of His divinity lies in the wonderful works of His life, and at His death ;—and in His resurrection from the dead. Of these facts Pilate is a witness, who sent a full account of them to Tiberius.

The above is not the only evidence for the truth of the Christian religion which Tertullian gives. He remarks on <sup>3</sup> the triumphs Christianity had achieved in convincing educated men ; on the changes for good which it effects in the life ; on <sup>4</sup> its power over the demons, who are, in fact, the heathen gods,—<sup>5</sup> The Christians compel the demons to bear witness to the truth of Christianity ; surely they are to be believed, when they speak to their own discredit.

Tertullian's object in thus speaking of the Christian evidence is apparent throughout. He describes what Christianity really is, that it may be seen what it is not ; that he may thus refute accusations of impiety and unnatural worship, and prove the Christians worthy of toleration.

The objection is now started,—<sup>6</sup> if Christianity is

<sup>1</sup> Tert c. 21.    <sup>2</sup> c. 21.    <sup>3</sup> c. 21.    <sup>4</sup> c. 22, 23.    <sup>5</sup> c. 23, 24.

<sup>6</sup> c. 25.

true, the heathen gods are no gods at all; and yet history shewed that the Romans had been prosperous because they had been pious. Tertullian is treading on delicate ground now, and he is not the man to tread delicately. <sup>1</sup> He proves, and proves conclusively, that history does not bear out this theory. The Romans were great before they were religious; they triumphed over gods, and, not till then, worshipped them. But he is not satisfied with this. <sup>2</sup> He finds instances where the gods did not exercise their power in the defence of their worshippers, and he brings these forward as proofs of want of power. Non-exercise of Divine power, according to Tertullian, proves its non-existence. Extremes meet; Celsus uses the same argument to impugn the divinity of Christ.

<sup>3</sup> The last charge Tertullian meets is that of treason against the Emperor. It was based simply on the fact that the Christians refused to pay him divine worship. This, as Tertullian explains, their religion forbids them to do, nevertheless they do not fail to invoke God for his safety, for this their religion requires of them; they pay him the respect due to the greatest man upon earth, and the minister of God. <sup>4</sup> They have special reasons for their prayers, for with the fall of the Roman Empire, which their prayers avert, will come the violent commotions which are impending over the whole world. As usual, <sup>5</sup> Tertullian is not satisfied with proving that the Christians are loyal, but he proceeds further to show

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 25, 26.    <sup>2</sup> c. 25.    <sup>3</sup> c. 28—36.    <sup>4</sup> c. 32.    <sup>5</sup> c. 35.



that they alone are loyal. He points to the prevalence of treason, to the provocation the Christians have received, to their numbers which make them formidable, and to their principles which render them harmless.

<sup>1</sup> The accusations against the Christians being now refuted, Tertullian explains the nature of the Christian society, with the intention of shewing that it contains none of the characteristics of a faction, nothing to make it formidable to the State, nothing to prevent its toleration. <sup>2</sup> He asserts that the Christians, so far from being the cause of public calamity, have been in reality the very salt of the earth; they have averted calamity from it. <sup>3</sup> He meets and denies the charge of unprofitableness in the concerns of life. <sup>4</sup> He boasts of the superior morality of the Christians,<sup>5</sup> and ascribes it to their rule of life, which is not human, but divine.

<sup>6</sup> And now we observe one of the characteristics of the Latin Apologists; he is not satisfied with regarding Christianity as a system of Philosophy, the completion and fulfilment of all others; he asserts its independent claims; he contrasts Philosophy with Christianity. A Philosopher is a theoretical searcher after truth—a Christian is a practical liver after it. The one seeks to enhance his reputation, the other to obtain salvation; the one speculates about the truth, the other knows it; the one teaches, but does not practise all the virtues; the other both teaches and practises them.

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 39. <sup>2</sup> c. 40. <sup>3</sup> c. 42. <sup>4</sup> c. 43, 44. <sup>5</sup> c. 45. <sup>6</sup> c. 46.



A Christian, if he does not practise virtue, ceases to be a Christian ; but a Philosopher, with bad deeds upon his hands, does not cease to be a Philosopher. <sup>1</sup> The Christians derive their wisdom from the Scriptures, and they are the storehouse of all later times ; thus, what of truth the Philosophers possess, comes from us ; <sup>2</sup> and on the other hand, our doctrines cannot be so utterly foolish, if found in them.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian concludes by appealing against the heathen cruelty. The Christians glory in their sufferings, though they do not suffer willingly ; they desire to suffer as the soldier longs for war ; when death comes then the victory is won. The cruelty of the heathen is of no avail ; the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church ; the deeds of the Christians find more disciples than the words of the Philosophers. No one who sees the fortitude of the Christians is unmoved by it, and does not inquire what is the cause of it ; does not, after inquiry, embrace the Christian doctrine ; and when he has once embraced it, is not ready to give up his life for it, and thus obtain God's complete forgiveness.

Tertullian's Apology is remarkable for its arrangement. He had a definite plan, and he always kept to it ; the only apparent digression in the work springs naturally out of his subject ; when he is answering the charge of impiety against the gods, he describes and

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 47.

<sup>2</sup> c. 48, 49.

<sup>3</sup> c. 50.

defends Christianity ; those men were not impious who were followers of such a religion.

The great blots of the work arise from his fiery nature. He is ever too ready to retort. In his zeal for attack he is careless of his own defence. Nothing, moreover, could be more impolitic than retort in a plea for toleration ; it shewed how intolerant the Christians were even when struggling for their very existence. The thought might well strike the heathen, this sect must be put down or it will put us down.

Tertullian shews great discretion in the choice of his authorities. In his other works, he constantly quotes the Scriptures,—here, very rarely ; and when he alludes to them, it is not to appeal to their authority, but to shew where the knowledge of Christianity was to be found.

In conclusion, however great may be its faults, Tertullian's *Apology* holds the first place among the *Apologies* of the age. It states and meets the accusations against the Christians fully and completely, and this was what had to be done. No one, moreover, can fail to admire the earnest spirit which pervades this work ; there is a thorough conviction of the claims of Christianity, and the injustice done to the Christians. The work is not a cold abstraction, but the warm appeal of a warm heart. This is a feature common to all the early *Apologies*, though in none is it so marked as in Tertullian's ; but it is, we believe, a feature peculiar to them. One cannot read

the Apologies of Grotius, Butler, or Paley, without being chilled by their cold dignity; but the early Apologies warm the very heart.

## § 2. CYPRIAN.

From Tertullian, the master and the writer, we pass on to Cyprian, the scholar and active administrator. Two of his treatises are of an Apologetic character; the address to Demetrianus, and the work on the Vanity of Idols. Both are of a fragmentary nature, and do not pretend to be complete Apologies for Christianity. The one was intended to remove from the Christians the odium of being the cause of the public calamities, from which, at that time, the empire was suffering; and the other to shew that the heathen idols are not gods, and that God is one. In each case practical exhortations are based on the arguments used.

<sup>1</sup> Demetrianus was the proconsul of Africa when Cyprian wrote his address to him. He appears to have been a man who hated and despised the Christians; a man of strong passions,—impatient of contradiction,—and furious when provoked. Cyprian knew it was useless to argue with him, and had in consequence long held his peace; but having learnt that he was spreading reports that the frequent wars, plagues, famines, and droughts, were to be ascribed to the Christians, he felt that it was not fitting that he should keep silence

<sup>1</sup> Cyp. ad Demet. c. 1, 2.

any longer, lest his silence should be interpreted as an acknowledgment of the charge. For these reasons Cyprian wrote his address. <sup>1</sup> He does not attempt, as Arnobius did afterwards, to show that the calamities of the age were in no way unusual: he allows the fact of their severity, and endeavours to account for it. He ascribes it to the age of the world, and the <sup>2</sup> judgment of God on heathen sins; and especially on their persecution of the Christians. If, he asks, the gods had sent these calamities on the world, as a punishment of the Christians, would <sup>3</sup> they not have so ordered them that the Christians should feel them the most severely? On the <sup>4</sup> contrary, however, the Christians bear them with patience, and thus deprive them of half their force; they are not broken down by them, and they look upon them as a discipline rather than a punishment: amongst the heathen, on the other hand, there is always a clamorous and <sup>5</sup> complaining impatience. In conclusion, he warns them of a future judgment, which will not fall equally on Christian and on Heathen, and urges them to escape from it while there is time.

In his treatise on the vanity of idols, Cyprian <sup>6</sup> proves from history that the heathen gods are no gods; <sup>7</sup> he ascribes their influence over men to the power of the demons. <sup>8</sup> He meets the argument that the power of the Romans is a consequence of their

<sup>1</sup> Cyp. ad Demet. c. 3, 4, 5. <sup>2</sup> c. 6—17. <sup>3</sup> c. 18. <sup>4</sup> c. 19, 20. <sup>5</sup> c. 21—24.

<sup>6</sup> De van. Idol. c. 1—5. <sup>7</sup> c. 6, 7. <sup>8</sup> c. 4, 5.

religious reverence. <sup>1</sup> He maintains that there can be only one God, as there can be only one king; <sup>2</sup> and he borrows from Tertullian the evidence for Christian doctrines, deducible from the testimony of the soul. <sup>3</sup> He gives in conclusion a short account of Christ's life.

Cyprian mixes up practical exhortations with his Apologetic treatises; and he appeals to the warnings of the prophets, as if their words were likely to be listened to by heathen. The address to Demetrianus, seems very ill calculated to effect its purpose. The work on the vanity of idols appears to be a popular tract, in which the arguments of the more complete Apologies are condensed into a short and simple form.

### § 3. MINUCIUS FELIX.

The Octavius of Minucius Felix, which is in the form of a dialogue between a heathen and a Christian, is remarkable for presenting a clear and complete picture of the Christians and their religion, as they appeared in the eyes of the heathen world. There is no attempt at attacking, or defending, Christianity as a system; certain Christian doctrines are, on the one hand, asserted to be incapable of belief, and, on the other, either have their inherent difficulties explained, or are shewn by analogy to be not absolutely incredible. As in the letters of Theophilus of Antioch, the ground is opened for future research. Christianity is shewn not to be

<sup>1</sup> Cyp. de van. Idol. c. 8.      <sup>2</sup> c. 9.      <sup>3</sup> c. 10—15.

that contemptible thing which men supposed it ; but this is all, no Christian doctrine is proved to be true.

<sup>1</sup> The heathen Cæcilius, by his arguments, represents that uncertainty in belief which was characteristic of the educated of his time. <sup>2</sup> He neither believes, nor disbelieves, in the pagan mythology. <sup>3</sup> He thinks it possible that the world and its inhabitants may have come into being by a concurrence of fortuitous atoms ; <sup>4</sup> and he sees, in the imperfection of the moral government which exists on earth, an argument that there is no Divine providence. <sup>5</sup> In this state of doubt, he thinks it wiser and safer to believe the opinions of the ancients ; to adore, without enquiry, the gods they worshipped ; to adhere to religious rites already established. It is useful to believe in the heathen divinities, even if they are not divinities at all. <sup>6</sup> He believes the widely extended power of the Romans to be a consequence of their religious reverence. Whatever may be the value of the accounts concerning the nature and origin of the gods, the concurrent assent of all nations is a strong proof of their existence. <sup>7</sup> Philosophers had indeed, in their conceit, endeavoured to weaken religious opinions, so ancient and so salutary ; but their Philosophy had never obtained reputation. Their case, however, was widely different from that of the Christians. <sup>8</sup> The Philosophers enquired circumspectly, spake doubtfully, still deliberated ; they knew that man was

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 5, 13.    <sup>2</sup> c. 6.    <sup>3</sup> c. 5.    <sup>4</sup> c. 5.    <sup>5</sup> c. 6, 13.

<sup>6</sup> c. 6, 7.    <sup>7</sup> c. 8.    <sup>8</sup> c. 13.



unable to explore divine things. <sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Christians,—“wretches of an abandoned, interdicted and desperate society,”—pronounced their opinions dogmatically, and spoke boldly against the gods. Here we have one of the few charges against Christianity, which have survived sixteen centuries ; now, as then, it is the dogmatism of Christianity which is offensive to the world.

<sup>2</sup> Cæcilius relates in detail the charges of immorality made against the Christians, and we may gather from his remarks the grounds on which those charges rested.

<sup>3</sup> The Christians were a secret society, distinguished by tokens and signs known only to themselves ; they never proclaimed their opinions openly,—it was plain, then, they had something shameful to conceal. They loved one another,—hence they indulged in promiscuous lust. They worshipped a malefactor,—could the servant be greater than his Master ?

The Christians seem now to have outlived the charge of atheism. <sup>4</sup> Their doctrines of the omniscience and omnipresence of God appeared strange and absurd to the heathen mind. Cæcilius thinks it impossible that God should be able to regard particulars, while attentive to the whole ; or be sufficient for the whole, while he is occupied about particulars. The notion of a God the heathen had, but of an infinite God he had not.

<sup>5</sup> The doctrines of the destruction of the world and

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 5, 8.

<sup>2</sup> c. 9.

<sup>3</sup> c. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> c. 10.

<sup>5</sup> c. 11.

the resurrection of the body are next attacked. How was it possible that the eternal order of nature could be dissolved, or that a body reduced to dust, and dispersed all over the world, should again be collected and live? He taunts the Christians with their miserable condition, and asks, where is the God who can help men to be immortal, but who cannot help the living? Poor pitiful creatures are the Christians, who neither enjoy the present life, nor shall revive hereafter.

There are traces that Christianity had now become better known than in earlier times; one reason has been already mentioned, another may be given: the heathen had got some acquaintance with the Christian doctrines of election and the grace of God. <sup>1</sup> Cæcilius says that the Christians suppose that men are not induced by their own will, but are impelled by the will of another, to favour their sect; what the heathen ascribe to fate, they ascribe to God.

In his reply Octavius passes over much of the old ground trodden by former Apologists. He uses Tertullian's argument from the <sup>2</sup> testimony of the soul; and, apparently, he partly derives the list of Philosophers, whom he used to prove Christian doctrine, from the Hortatory Address to the Greeks ascribed to Justin. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> c. 18. There is a controversy whether Minucius Felix borrowed from Tertullian, or Tertullian from Minucius Felix, but certainly the former hypothesis seems more in conformity with the genius of the two writers.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. c. 18, with Just. Hort. c. 3, 4.

In his attacks on Heathenism, it was scarcely possible for him to be original. Nevertheless, there is much in his argument not to be found elsewhere, and his arrangement is elegant, and his own. Nature furnishes him with many arguments; he uses the facts of the <sup>1</sup> course of nature to shew that there must be a prime Artificer and perfect Intelligence, <sup>2</sup> the argument from analogy to shew the credibility of Christian doctrines. He quotes largely from the opinions of the Philosophers, and is evidently well acquainted <sup>3</sup> with physical geography. "Britain," he says, "is deficient in sunshine, but it is invigorated by the warmth of the sea which flows round it." When he attacks the heathen mythology he does not dwell so much on the immoralities of the gods, <sup>4</sup> as on their acknowledged original human nature and the ridiculous character of their legendary history, and of the religious ceremonies in their honour. <sup>5</sup> He had also to meet the argument that Roman success was due to Roman piety, and this he does by appealing to the facts of history, which made the connection uncertain.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most remarkable part of the whole defence is that in which he refutes the arguments drawn from the poverty, wretchedness, and sufferings of the Christians. <sup>7</sup> He views them all with the light of Christianity resting on them. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 17.    <sup>2</sup> c. 34.    <sup>3</sup> c. 18.    <sup>4</sup> c. 21—24.    <sup>5</sup> c. 25, 26.

<sup>6</sup> c. 36.    <sup>7</sup> c. 36.

more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;"—this is the language of his heart. <sup>1</sup> To him, beautiful is the sight of the sufferings of a Christian martyr. He is on his victorious battle field, and his general's eye is upon him. It is no physical courage which nerves him, for boys, slaves, and women deride crosses, and tortures, and wild beasts. While man is torturing the body, God is trying the soul — the wrath of man is working the purposes of God.

Two great distinctions underlie the whole arguments of the Heathen and the Christian. For the one there is no certainty ; the greatest Philosophers confessed their ignorance ; and the legends of the gods seemed contrary to reason. It is best not to enquire ; that which the intellect condemns, antiquity has sanctioned, and history has proved salutary.

For the other there is no doubt ; he has a Divine revelation ; and a Divine unity runs through it all. He is confident in his belief in a beneficent Providence, who is ever watching over him ; he looks "for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

Again, very narrow is the view of the one. "The proper study for mankind is man ;" he errs who attempts to reason on divine things ; he can see no scheme of providence in the world ; the rain falls on the just and on the unjust, and there is no life beyond the grave. He has but his own light to guide him ; his divine

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 37.

conceptions are but human ; the notion of an omniscient, omnipresent God is beyond his reason, and seems contrary to it.

Very comprehensive is the view of the other. He sees everything in the bright light of the Sun of Righteousness. He studies man, indeed, but as a part of a great creation ; as a being whose life only begins in this world ; whose life here is a training for the life hereafter. The inequalities of the Divine government have all their rectifying place ; we see only the beginnings of the threads here, their ends are hid out of sight.

These distinctions, though two in character, are one in origin ; the uncertainty and narrowness both arise from the absence of Divine light ; they are both removed by the Christian revelation.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the least happy part of this Apology is its conclusion ; Cœcilius is converted by arguments which do not prove the truth of Christianity, but only its credibility.

#### § 4. ARNOBIUS.

According to Jerome, the work of Arnobius against the Gentiles is in one respect unique amongst the Apologies. It is not the work of a Christian. It is a test of good faith ; a proof that one who had formerly opposed Christianity was now thoroughly convinced of

<sup>1</sup> Octavius, c. 40.



the truth of its claims, and was fit to be admitted to its privileges by baptism. It may, however, perhaps be questioned whether this was not a hypothesis to explain errors in the work. <sup>1</sup> Lardner argues against the genuineness of the passage, and <sup>2</sup> Neander thinks the story wholly out of place where it stands.

The date of this work is placed about 305 or 306, A.D. It was written during the time of the Diocletian persecution. <sup>3</sup> Its object is to free the Christians from the charge, so vehemently insisted on by some, that they have been the cause of all manner of evils affecting the human race. The time for accusing them of immorality had gone by. It is their impiety towards the gods bringing calamities on the human race, which stirs up the passions of the populace.

Arnobius' answers to the charge are of various kinds. <sup>4</sup> In the first place, he has an Historical argument; he denies that there is anything new or unusual in the calamities. He points to wars, famines, and pestilences, which befell the human race before the coming of Christ. The troubles which befall men now in no respect differ from these; in one point, indeed, there has been a mitigation of calamity; <sup>5</sup> the violence of wars has been assuaged since the preaching of Christ.

His second argument is Metaphysical. <sup>6</sup> He finds

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv. p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. Church, vol. ii. p. 19. Bohn's Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Adv. gentes, i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> i. 2—5.

<sup>5</sup> i. 6.

<sup>6</sup> i. 8—12.



the cause of calamities in the nature of things. Good fortune and misfortune may, he thinks, be obliged to alternate in a sort of tide. One man's good is another's hurt. The partial evil may be the universal good. All events must be looked upon from a general, not a particular, point of view. Prosperity long continued contains in itself the seeds of future calamity.

His third argument is derived from the nature of the punishment; <sup>1</sup> this comes upon Heathen and Christian, alike. If the Christians only were to blame, it would have been otherwise ordered. Again, the Christians are in all nations, and yet some are prosperous and others plagued.

<sup>2</sup> His idea of the nature of the gods furnishes him with a fourth argument. He asserts that anger is unworthy of the gods, and cannot exist in a divine and eternal nature. Anger implies passion; passion, perturbation; perturbation, grief and sickness; grief and sickness, corruption; corruption, death.

<sup>3</sup> His fifth argument is the most important to us, and the remainder of the treatise is taken up in discussing it. <sup>4</sup> He denies the charge of impiety. The Christians worship the one true God; <sup>5</sup> they are justified in not worshipping the gods of the heathen. Contrary to the usual custom, he takes the former of these reasons first; he establishes Christianity, before he refutes Heathenism.

<sup>1</sup> Arnob. i. 15, 16, 19.

<sup>2</sup> i. 17—24.

<sup>3</sup> i. 25.

<sup>4</sup> i. 29.

<sup>5</sup> i. 30, 34.

<sup>1</sup> Arnobius begins his task by defending the Christian religion; it consists in worship and prayer to Christ. <sup>2</sup> It is granted by all that there can have been only one original self-existent Being; the idea of a Supreme Governor is innate; this is He whom the Christians worship. None, however, of the gods of the heathen come up to this idea. But it may be objected, Christ was only a man, a man, too, who suffered a malefactor's death. He therefore proceeds to prove that Christ is God. <sup>3</sup> Formerly, he says, all mankind were in ignorance; they worshipped stocks and stones. Christ revealed to them true knowledge, the way to worship the true God. <sup>4</sup> Is not then Christ, if only a man by nature, worthy to be called God for his merits, and for his great gifts to men? But this is not all; Christ's acts prove Him to be <sup>5</sup> God by nature. To establish the truth of this, Arnobius draws that <sup>6</sup> magnificent distinction between Christ's miracles and those of all other men, in which the value of his Apology mainly consists. This has been quoted before, and we shall not allude further to it here except to remark on its originality. We do not find much to perplex us in the claims of miracles rivalling those of Christ now; but it was otherwise with the early Christians, and therefore all the more credit is due to the man who first clearly drew out those fundamental distinctions which have been generally acknowledged ever since.

<sup>1</sup> Arnob. adv. gentes, i. 27.    <sup>2</sup> i. 28.    <sup>3</sup> i. 39.    <sup>4</sup> i. 38.    <sup>5</sup> i. 42.

<sup>6</sup> i. 43—52.

<sup>1</sup> Arnobius finds evidences of Christianity in the harmony and consistency of its whole system ; its quick <sup>2</sup> spread, in spite of persecutions, amongst so many nations, and amongst men of learning ; <sup>3</sup> and he then entangles himself in a long argument concerning the nature of souls. He denies that they are immortal by nature, or that they are created by God ; if they had been, they would have been perfect ; and they would never have come down to animate bodies. It is impossible, he thinks, to conceive that the King of the World sent down souls to be immersed in human seed, to pass through the female womb, to go through all the humiliations of childhood, to sin all the sins, to suffer all the sufferings, to be encompassed with all the infirmities, of men. He will not admit the arguments derived from the freedom of the will. God must have foreseen men would fall into sin, and He would never, if they had been His work, have placed them under circumstances which made their fall certain. He refuses to attempt to explain the origin of evil ; one thing only he knows for certain about it,—God cannot be its author.

Arnobius is of an unpractical nature, and he deals with unpractical questions. Thus, in addition to the above, he discusses the question why Christ came so late into the world, and what <sup>4</sup> was the fate of those who lived before He came. He does not, however, dogmatize on such matters ; he commonly states the

<sup>1</sup> Arnob. *adv. gentes*, i. 54, 55.    <sup>2</sup> ii. 5.    <sup>3</sup> ii. 15—44.    <sup>4</sup> ii. 63—66.

difficulty, and then asserts the impossibility of speaking with certainty on the matter.

The above heads furnish matter for the discussions of the first two books. In the first five chapters of the third book he gives arguments in proof of the unity of God ; in the remainder of his seven books he attacks heathenism. His argument in favour of monotheism, or rather against polytheism, is clear, and well adapted to strike a heathen mind. He suggests a theory which is in some respects a compromise. There can only be one source of Deity ; He is the Supreme God ; from Him all other divinities, if such there be, derive their nature ; there is, therefore, no necessity for the separate worship of these. In the Supreme Being they are all worshipped, just as the family of a king is honoured in the person of the king. If one of these inferior divinities is worshipped, then all ought to be ; if some are left unworshipped with impunity, then surely all may. But the safest way, considering the doubt which rests on the existence of these divinities, is to worship the Primal Essence of Divinity only, for all the rest are worshipped in Him. The rest of the book is occupied in arguing against the heathen systems. His arguments do not differ from those used by the other Apologists.

In the fourth and fifth books he proceeds with his arguments against the heathen systems. He shews the contradictory character of the stories told of one and the same God ; and the number of gods bearing the

same name ; he exposes the heathen myths, and denies they are allegories.

The subject of the sixth book is the heathen temples and images ;—he denies their utility.

The last book is an elaborate argument against sacrifices, on these grounds :—

(1.) Because they are earthly and material, and cannot please beings of a heavenly and supernatural nature.

(2.) Because the sacrifices are made to avert the anger of God, and God has no passions.

(3.) Because there is no reason that innocent animals should be sacrificed for the sake of guilty men.

(4.) Because the facts of history are against their efficacy.

(5.) Because the gifts of the gods cannot be the objects of sale.

(6.) Because, in certain cases, opposing parties offer sacrifices to the same gods.

(7.) Because the system gives an advantage to the rich and bad man, over the poor and good one.

Arnobius takes the particular cases of incense and wine, and the public games, and proves they cannot be acceptable to the gods.

The cause of Arnobius' theological errors was this : he was unable to imagine that any work of God was anything, or could be anything, but perfect. He had no notion of a mere capacity for, or germ of, perfection ; a creature which had anything to learn, or was incom-



plete in any way, had in it the seeds of death and corruption, and therefore could not have owed its existence to the incorruptible God.

### § 5. LACTANTIUS.

We have now arrived at the last of the Apologies—The Divine Institutions of Lactantius—a work in some respects the most pretentious of them all.

<sup>1</sup> From Jerome, we learn that Lactantius was an African by birth, a scholar of Arnobius, and a rhetorician. He was sent for by Diocletian to teach rhetoric at Nicomedia, and he lived in that city throughout the persecution. His Apology is considered by some to be as late as 320 A.D., but <sup>2</sup> as it was occasioned by the writings of two heathen which were published at the beginning of the persecution, it is probable that it dates much earlier. <sup>3</sup> Lardner thinks it was written whilst the persecution was going on, though not published till after it was over. In some manuscripts there is an inscription to Constantine, but in others it is wanting, which suggests the idea that it was afterwards added by Lactantius or others.

Lactantius was the most eloquent of the early Christian writers, and has been called the Christian Cicero. "Lactantius," <sup>4</sup> says Jerome, "flows like a river of Tullian eloquence." <sup>5</sup> He himself speaks of his diligence in the

<sup>1</sup> De Vir. Illust. c. 80.      <sup>2</sup> Div. Inst. v. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cred. Gosp. His. vol. vii. p. 83.      <sup>4</sup> Ad. Paul. Ep. 49.      <sup>5</sup> Div. Inst. i. 1.



cultivation of eloquence, which he valued as of use in the defence of true religion.<sup>1</sup> He believed that the truth was despised if it was not propounded in an elegant style.

The object for which the *Divine Institutions* was written is one of very considerable importance. <sup>2</sup> It was not simply to refute the arguments of those two heathen who had occasioned his writing, which was an easy task, but at one swoop to answer all the arguments of present or past opponents of the Christians, and to take away the ground from under the feet of all future ones. He draws a distinction between his own task and that of former Apologists. It is one thing, he says, to answer accusation, and another to state your own case ; in the latter the whole substance of Christian doctrine is contained.

His work is divided into seven books. The first treats of false religion ; the second, of the origin of error ; the third, of false wisdom ; the fourth, of true wisdom ; the fifth, of justice ; the sixth, of true worship ; the seventh, of a future life.

In his first book he passes by the question <sup>3</sup> of the existence of a Supreme God, with a simple allusion to the argument from design. The subject which he offers for discussion is, <sup>4</sup>whether the world is governed by the power of one God, or of many.

<sup>5</sup> He first of all uses abstract reasonings against

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. v. 1.      <sup>2</sup> v. 4.      <sup>3</sup> i. 2.      <sup>4</sup> i. 3.

<sup>5</sup> i. 3.

<sup>1</sup> polytheism, and then the testimonies <sup>2</sup> of Prophets, Poets, and Philosophers. He rests the authority of the Prophets on the morality of their teaching, and on the conviction of its truth, which they shewed by giving up comforts, and enduring persecution, for the sake of disseminating it. From the abstract question of polytheism, he proceeds to discuss the types of it extant in the world. He believes the heathen gods to be men remarkable for power or wisdom when they lived on earth.<sup>3</sup> He explains how they came to be regarded as gods. He ascribes it to poetic fancy. The Poets clothed human events in a divine <sup>4</sup> dress, and he quotes Cicero to support him in this opinion. He examines the history of some of the gods, and shews that their nature is not divine, but, on the contrary, immoral and <sup>5</sup> despicable. He remarks on the cruelty of the religious rites by which they were worshipped.\*

In Lactantius' second book he gives the reason why men are deceived. <sup>6</sup> He traces it all to the earthly part of the nature of man, which is ever dragging him down from high and heavenly things, to worship things of earth.<sup>7</sup> In eloquent language, he exposes the folly of worshipping images. He is on ground trodden before him by the Philosophers now, and he knows it. <sup>8</sup> They have seen the vanity of the heathen religion, but strange to relate, they persist in their honour of it. If this is the case with the learned, how is it likely that the

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. i. 4.    <sup>2</sup> i. 5—7.    <sup>3</sup> i. 8.    <sup>4</sup> i. 15.    <sup>5</sup> i. 21.

<sup>6</sup> ii. 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> ii. 2.

<sup>8</sup> ii. 3.

unlearned can be raised from their superstition. He pictures the condition of the heathen world in these words:—<sup>1</sup> “This is the sum of the matter;—the unwise and inexperienced consider the false religions to be true, because they cannot discern between what is true and what is false. The more prudent, on the other hand, in their ignorance of the truth, either persist in their adherence to false religions, lest they should appear to be atheists, or have no religious reverence at all, lest they should fall into error. *That*, however, is the greatest error of all — to imitate the life of a brute in the person of a man. To penetrate falsehood is the mark of wisdom, but wisdom nothing more than human; beyond this point man cannot go; so far the Philosophers, in exposing heathenism, have gone. But to know the truth is a mark of divine wisdom; man cannot attain this knowledge himself, he must be taught of God. The Philosophers attained the height of human wisdom, so that they came to understand that which is not; they were unable to reach such a point as to declare that which is. Well-known are the words of Cicero, “Would that it were as easy to discover the truth, as to expose falsehood.”

<sup>2</sup> He gives an argument, commonly used in his time, but nevertheless unsound, to prove the weakness of the gods. He takes the case of men who have committed acts of sacrilege; he argues against their punishment by men; surely the gods can defend themselves. He

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 3.      7 ii. 4.

gives a number of instances of men who despised the gods, and who were yet unpunished. Like Tertullian, he is unable to distinguish between the non-existence and non-exercise of divine power, and this may be traced to the difference of God's dealings with men, under the Judaic and Christian dispensation; in the former, punishment and reward were more plainly attached to the action, than in the latter.

<sup>1</sup> He examines the claims of the various powers of nature to be considered gods, and rejects them, owing to their want of freedom of action.

Lactantius, the latest of the Apologists, has much in common with Justin, the earliest. He is a philosopher, and sees in reason a divine power, and he appeals to it against antiquity; he believes that every one must rely on it in his search after truth. <sup>2</sup> Reason is God's gift to men, that they might, by it, make discoveries and weigh arguments. When antiquity is opposed to reason, antiquity must give way. Our fathers were not wiser than we.

The rest of this book is occupied with discussions on various subjects. Lactantius explains the <sup>3</sup> nature of the demons, and attributes the heathen miracles to them. <sup>4</sup> He gives an account of creation, and explains it allegorically, and he finds a reason for the existence of evil, in the fact that good <sup>5</sup> contends with it, and is thereby made perfect.

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. ii. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> ii. 8, 14—16.

<sup>4</sup> ii. 9—13.

<sup>5</sup> ii. 16.

The third book is devoted to a refutation of Philosophy. Lactantius is not altogether hostile to it; he commends the Philosophers for their search after wisdom. He gives the most complete argument against the Heathen Philosophy contained in the Apologists. The following are its principal heads:—

<sup>1</sup> (1.) Philosophy is not wisdom, but the search after it. Wisdom comes from God, and not from disputing. The Heathen Philosophy, being simply human, is nothing better than speculation.

<sup>2</sup> (2.) The different systems of philosophy are mutually contradictory.

<sup>3</sup> (3.) The Philosophers divorce wisdom and religion; the soul and the understanding.

<sup>4</sup> (4.) The Philosophers are ignorant of the nature of the highest good of which man is capable.

<sup>5</sup> This is—(a) more than animal.

(b) Not knowledge, for knowledge is not sought for its own sake.

(c) Not virtue, for it is only the means to an end.<sup>6</sup>

(d) But religion; of this the Philosophers are ignorant.

<sup>7</sup> (5.) The Philosophers themselves are not moral. Philosophy consists in words, not in deeds. Its precepts cannot be enforced, for they have no systems of rewards and punishments attached to them.

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iii. 2, 3.      <sup>2</sup> iii. 4—6.      <sup>3</sup> iii. 10—13.

<sup>4</sup> iii. 7.      <sup>5</sup> iii. 8.      <sup>6</sup> iii. 10.      <sup>7</sup> iii. 15, 16, 27.



Lactantius proceeds to point out errors in the three great, and other minor schools, of Philosophy.<sup>1</sup> He traces all failures to the fact that the Philosophers either believed in a false religion, or rejected religion altogether.

<sup>2</sup> The fourth book is intended to shew that true wisdom and religion cannot be separated. Lactantius asserts that they can only be united in a monotheistic religion. <sup>3</sup> To understand God we have need of wisdom ; to worship Him we have need of religion ; wisdom leads the way, religion follows after. Information concerning the true God is to be found in the prophets, who lived ages ago. He now, for the first time, speaks of Christ. <sup>4</sup> He distinguishes Him from the angels. Christ is the *sermo Dei* ; He proceeds from the mouth of God, to teach. The angels are the *spiritus Dei* ; they proceed from the nostrils of God, to minister.

<sup>5</sup> Lactantius remarks on various points connected with the nature and life of Christ ;—His heavenly and earthly generation ;—His first and second advents ;—the predictions of Him by the prophets ;—His miracles worked by His word ; and not by magical art, which has nothing of truth or reality in it ;—His Incarnation, sufferings, and death, which were necessary, because man had need of an example ;—and His unity with the

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iii. 17—23.      <sup>2</sup> iv. 2.      <sup>3</sup> iv. 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> iv. 8.      <sup>5</sup> iv. 5—25.



Father. The Son is a stream from the fountain, a ray from the sun, a voice from the mouth.

<sup>1</sup> He refers to the many heresies which had sprung up, and declares that truth is only to be found in the Catholic Church.

Lactantius was not any more critical than the rest of the Apologists. He vindicated the <sup>2</sup> authenticity of the Sibylline writings. He believed <sup>3</sup> that the Jesus, spoken of in Zechariah, was not the High Priest, but Christ; and some of the other passages which he quotes from the prophets as referring to Christ, seem to have no such reference.

<sup>4</sup> Lactantius commences the fifth book by a criticism of some of the Apologists. He considers the Apology of Tertullian to be better in shewing what the Christians were not, than what they were; and blames Cyprian for using the testimonies of the Scriptures in his appeal to Demetrianus, rather than arguments and reason.

<sup>5</sup> The subject of the fifth book is Justice. This he believes to have left the world because of the neglect <sup>6</sup> of the worship of the true God,—and <sup>7</sup> to have been restored by Christ; in its practice the Christian religion consists. <sup>8</sup> He shews that the heathen do not practise it; their lives are immoral; they worship immoral gods, and they persecute the Christians. <sup>9</sup> The Philosophers also are ignorant of it. It has two parts—piety, and equity; the one could not exist in those

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. iv. 30.      <sup>2</sup> iv. 15.      <sup>3</sup> iv. 14.      <sup>4</sup> v. 1, 4.

<sup>5</sup> v. 5.      <sup>6</sup> v. 78.      <sup>7</sup> v. 9.      <sup>8</sup> v. 10.      <sup>9</sup> v. 14.

who do not worship the true God, the other consists in acknowledging the equality of men, which the Romans and Greeks did not. <sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Christians do practise justice ; for they both worship the true God, and they consider all men equal, and brethren.

<sup>2</sup> He refutes certain arguments of Carneades to prove that justice and wisdom cannot co-exist in a man. He distinguishes between sapientia, and calliditas, and astutia. The reward of virtue and wisdom is immortality. The arguments of Carneades can have no force for men who believe in a life beyond the grave. He examines the charges of foolishness brought against the Christians ; he traces them to their constancy in refusing to worship the gods. He denies that a religion can be defended by violence ; in its essence it is voluntary. The hatred of the <sup>3</sup> demons to the Christians inspires persecution ; and it is allowed by God for the sifting of His Church, for the practice of patience, and, as experience shews, for the increase of the Church.

The sixth book relates to the worship of God. <sup>4</sup> He examines the nature of the rites and sacrifices by which the true God should be worshipped. He decides that innocence is the best sacrifice men can offer to God. <sup>5</sup> He distinguishes virtue from its counterfeits. <sup>6</sup> Vice, he thinks, is necessary for the practice of virtue ;—where there is no adversary there is

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. v. 14.    <sup>2</sup> v. 16, 17.    <sup>3</sup> v. 19, 21, 22.    <sup>4</sup> vi. 1.

<sup>5</sup> vi. 5—14.    <sup>6</sup> vi. 16.

no victory. He divides sacrifices into two classes,—<sup>1</sup> *dona et sacrificia* ; “*Donum est integritas animi* ;” “*sacrificium, laus et hymnus* :” and he comes to the conclusion, “*Id ergo solum Deo exhibere atque offerre debemus, ad quod capiendum nos ipse generavit.*” This book thus treats of Christian ethics.

The subject of the seventh book is Immortality. He explains <sup>2</sup> the nature of man, and <sup>3</sup> exposes the errors of the Philosophers on the point. <sup>4</sup> He shews that immortality is the highest good of which we are capable. He gives arguments for the immortality of the soul, which differ greatly in power. <sup>5</sup> He argues from the capacity of men, to understand eternal and heavenly things. The mind has a knowledge of an eternal God ; that which is capable of the knowledge of eternal things is itself eternal. So far good ; but when he proceeds to argue thus ; man uses fire,—fire is heavenly,—therefore man has a heavenly and an eternal nature ;—we are astonished at the absurdity of the argument.

<sup>6</sup> Lactantius closes this book, and the whole work, by an account of the events which are coming on the world. He considers this last book supplementary. His task had been accomplished in the other six. This book is to cover and adorn the former, without which, he thinks, his work would be of little use.

Such is a summary of the Institutions of Lactantius.

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. vi. 25.      <sup>2</sup> vii. 1.      <sup>3</sup> vii. 3—6.      <sup>4</sup> vii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> vii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> vii. 16—27.

His book is too extensive in character to be minutely examined, and there is much in it not of an Apologetic character, and therefore extraneous from our subject.

It may be said of him, as of the other Apologists, that he is better for attack than defence. This, indeed, arises from the nature of things. <sup>1</sup> The most interesting part of his work is his refutation of Philosophy; he has a clear conception of the nature and causes of its failure, and he does not refuse to give it credit for that which it had been able to achieve. He had, perhaps, something more than mere confidence in the strength of his cause, viz., an excess of confidence in his own powers; he was proud of his eloquence, and he compares himself with other Apologists, to their disadvantage. His eloquence is undoubted, but he is inclined to verbosity, and it very often happens, that after many chapters of discussion, he sums up in one the pith of the whole argument. His arrangement is not good, either in idea or in execution. He continually comes back to the same subjects. Thus, much of book vii. has its proper place in books iii. and iv. The question of the <sup>1</sup> authenticity of the Prophets has no place in book i. An account of the creation of the world does not <sup>2</sup> belong to book ii. The fact is, he separates his defence and his attack, and places the latter first; and, before attacking error, it is often necessary to define truth.

<sup>1</sup> Lact. Div. Inst. vii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> ii. 9.

Lactantius professes to expose Heathenism and Philosophy, and then to establish Christianity, but he was only able to do the former in the light of Christianity; he could only see their imperfections by contrasting them with its perfection. If he had begun by explaining the true nature of man, and had refuted heathen and philosophical errors by shewing their incapacity to satisfy it, he might have accomplished his task by arguments and reason alone. He might afterwards have shewn the sufficiency of Christianity to satisfy man's nature, and have examined its historical claims, and the evidence of its truth derivable from prophecy and miracles. His underlying argument throughout his work is drawn from the capacity of man, and he ought, therefore, to have explained first what he deemed that capacity to be. As he did not, he is led into repetitions and anticipations. He falls into the same error which he condemns in others,—the use of testimonies of Scripture against those by whom their authority was not allowed.

In his appeals to reason, in his philosophic spirit, in his view of the heathen philosophy, Lactantius reminds us more of the Greek than of the Latin Apologists. Unlike the former, however, he appeals to miracles, with confidence, as an evidence of truth. Magic can only produce cunning semblances, not solid realities.

We sum up the character and value of the Divine Institutions of Lactantius in his use of the argument to be derived from a consideration of the nature and

capacity of man. His book is not a defence of Christians from accusation, he defends them, indeed, from the charge of foolishness, but this is all. The time had passed for accusations of immorality, and that of impiety was nearly dropped. Christianity was much better known than in Justin's time; although edicts of persecution were in force, it had been acknowledged as a *religio licita* for many years. The ground, therefore, was cleared for a work like the Divine Institutions, which should discuss in greater detail the nature and evidences of a religion which had become so powerful, and seemed likely to attain to pre-eminence in the State.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CREDIBILITY OF THE APOLOGISTS.

THE important question now comes before us,—how far are the Apologists credible witnesses? How far can they be relied upon when they testify to facts?

No one, we believe, can read the Apologies without being thoroughly convinced of the *bona fides* of their writers. Their indignant, manly, protest against malicious accusations and persecutions, and their enthusiastic belief in their religion, cannot have been imitated by forgers of books, or inventors of falsehoods. It is not on this ground their credibility will be questioned, the points to be examined are—

1. Whether certain statements they make with respect to demoniacal possession, which have been disputed, and on the truth of which, it is not too much to say, their credibility depends, are true or false.

2. What importance we are to attach to the undoubted errors they make in matters of fact and interpretation.

(1.) It has been a much discussed question, *when* the power of working miracles ceased in the Christian Church. It has been variously answered by different

schools of thought ; the Romanist, on the one hand, denies that the power has ever ceased ; the Infidel, that it ever existed ; and Protestant and Anglican divines have taken intermediate views, agreeing in only two respects, that the power of working miracles did once exist, and has now ceased, or is, at any rate, now dormant. Theological bias has had much to do with deciding the question. The Protestant writer has often been unable to see that the evidence for the existence of the earlier ecclesiastical miracles is any stronger than that for those in mediæval times. His position compels him to regard the latter as false, whatever the evidence in their favour may be. History being thus an unsafe guide for him, he falls back on Inspiration, and cuts the Gordian knot by denying the existence of miraculous powers beyond the Apostolic times. He believes the Scripture miracles to be true, because they are contained in the inspired Word of God ; but no uninspired evidence satisfies him. He does not believe the Church to have been invested with any supernatural powers ; he believes that she was early corrupted ; and he traces in the accounts of early miracles that superstitious spirit which culminated in the middle ages. This theory has at least the merits of fixing with decision the epoch when miracles ceased ; of clearly determining on what evidence miracles can be accepted as true. It has, on the other hand, the disadvantages of deciding on *a priori* principles enquiries capable of being settled by historical evidence ; of

throwing over history altogether, when it comes in conflict with preconceived opinions ; and of starting with the implied assumption,—a miracle is so improbable that nothing less than inspired evidence shall ever induce us to believe an account of one to be true.

On the other hand, those holding more moderate opinions find the greatest difficulty in deciding when the gift of working miracles ceased in the Church ; the evidence for certain Ecclesiastical miracles is so strong that they cannot but believe it, but they are perplexed by finding that, as far as they can see, the evidence for supernatural power does not grow weaker, but the contrary, as time rolls on in the history of the Church ;—in fact, that there is more evidence for the existence of supernatural powers in the third century, than in the second, in the fourth, than in the third.

The question, when did miracles cease, will not be discussed here ; nor will a general inquiry into the existence of miraculous powers in the first three centuries be entered upon. It so happens that the Apologists speak very little of miraculous powers in general, whilst their statements as to the existence of one power—that of casting out devils—are most clear and decisive. Once admit, indeed, that a miraculous gift existed in the Church in post-Apostolic times, and the way is materially cleared for the proof of the existence of others ; but here we have to do solely with this one, and the question is very important, for if we

decide that no such power existed, the credit of the Apologists is most seriously shaken.

We have, in a former chapter, given an account of the nature, origin, and method of working of the demons, as described by the Apologists. We shall not attempt to prove the existence of any such beings, but we shall assume the literal truth of the Scriptural narrative, and shall (1) thence argue the probability of the truth of the accounts given in the Apologists of demoniacal possession, and the casting out of devils, as forming a natural continuation of the Scriptural account; and (2) we shall adduce the positive evidence for the existence of this supernatural gift, and thence shew its existence to be not only probable, but a fact. When we come to examine the Scripture accounts of demoniacal possession, we cannot but be struck with the prevalence of the disease. "To cast out devils" seems to have been as prominent a part of the work of Christ as "to heal the sick." He describes His work to Herod as, <sup>1</sup> "I cast out devils and do cures." "To <sup>2</sup> cast out devils" is part of the charge which He gives to the Twelve when He sends them out to teach and to preach. <sup>3</sup> That the devils are subject to them is the joyful cry of the Seventy when they return from their mission. <sup>4</sup> First in the list of the signs which should follow them that believe, given by Christ before He was taken up into heaven, stands,—“In my name they

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Luke x. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Mark, xvi. 17.

shall cast out devils.” <sup>1</sup> After the Ascension of Christ, amongst the special miracles which were wrought by the hands of St. Paul, this is specified. <sup>2</sup> Some of the Jews in Ephesus were exorcists by profession, and many used curious arts. Is it natural then that a disease, so prevalent in Apostolic times, found apparently in every city, should suddenly cease? Is it not much more likely that it gradually declined as the power of Christianity was more universally diffused? Again, there is no reason for believing—but quite the contrary—that a power which was not confined to the Apostles during their life, ceased at their death. During the lifetime of Christ, the Seventy had it; what is more, it was possessed by <sup>3</sup> the man who “followed not with” the Apostles, so that not even personal discipleship was required. It was to be a <sup>4</sup> sign which should follow simple believers in Christ, and when it is objected that the power in Ecclesiastical times was claimed by insignificant members of the Church more frequently than by those of name and influence, we see a fulfilment of the sign given. There seem to be special reasons why the supernatural power of casting out devils should be granted, and that to Christians. For (1) no natural cure existed, and (2) it was the object of Christ’s coming to destroy the works of the devil; and when the Seventy announced that the devils were subject to them, then it was that Christ exclaimed, <sup>5</sup> “I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven.”

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 11, 12.      <sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ix. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Mark xvi. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Luke x. 18.

It has been said that the Church could not cure the demoniacs, or, at least, only temporarily. If we refer to <sup>1</sup> Bingham's *Antiquities*, we find there an account of a class of men possessed with devils, called *ἐνεργούμενοι*, who dwelt in the Church under the charge of the exorcists, who prayed over them, and kept them at some innocent business, to prevent their more violent agitations. Here, then, we have a class of men possessed with devils whom the Christians were not able to cure; all that they could do was to keep them in check. It is argued, that if the power of exorcism had existed in the Church, such persons would not have been found. But to argue that no power of curing demoniacs existed in the Church, because some were left uncured, is as unfair as it would be to argue that Christ was not able to heal the sick, because there were sick whom he left unhealed. The power of indiscriminate healing is not claimed for any man, and was not exercised by Christ. It was not until the <sup>2</sup> damsel with a spirit of divination at Philippi had called after St. Paul many days, that he, being grieved, commanded the spirit to come out of her. The chief reason, however, for which we meet this objection here is, to draw attention to the analogy existing between the Ecclesiastical and Scriptural accounts in this respect. For some reason, which we cannot explain, the power of casting out devils seems to have been more difficult to exercise than that of healing the sick. Christ gave

<sup>1</sup> xi. 5. § 3. xv. 4. § 16. xvii. 5. § 3.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 17, 18.



the latter power only to the Seventy, and when they returned they seemed to have been surprised that the devils also were subject to them—"καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ὑποτάσσεται"—and the words used do not indicate that they were able always to cast out the devils with whom they came in contact; they imply nothing more than that they kept them in restraint, and that they compelled them to confess their power. Again, the solitary instance on record of a miracle attempted in vain by the Apostles is in the case of a demoniac, and when the matter is brought before our Lord's notice, and the Apostles ask him,<sup>1</sup> "Why could not we cast him out?" the reply is, "Because of your unbelief; this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Thus we seem to have indications that a faith powerful over one devil would not avail to cast out another; in other words, that the devils had different degrees of power over the bodies they possessed. Again, in the accounts given of exorcisms, we observe various stages in the process; the very presence of our Lord and his Apostles is sufficient to draw from the demon a confession of 2 subjection. The mere name of Jesus, invoked by vagabond exorcists, seems to have been used with effect in many instances, and in the case of a more powerful demon elicited an acknowledgment of His power. Here then, surely, we have an analogy with the case of the ἐνεργούμενοι, the devils are kept in subjection by the exorcists, although they cannot altogether cast them out.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii. 19, 21.    <sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 13, 15.

It is objected, again, to the existence of this power in the Church, that the Christians who claim it for themselves acknowledge that non-Christians,—Jews, and Heathen,—have it. <sup>1</sup> We answer, that according to the Apologists' own theory of the nature of demons, this would be the case; for their account of them is that they are subtle beings who possess men, and then, for the purpose of enhancing the credit of the heathen temples and heathen gods, and thus strengthening the power of error, depart from them, apparently at the command of the priest, or in the presence of the god. Thus, the possession and the exorcism is only a subtle trick; the cures are not worked for the benefit of the person, they are only in appearance, not in reality. Again, the Apologists in this respect only follow the writers of the Bible; *there* the existence of supernatural powers is recognized in those who are not worshippers of the true God. <sup>2</sup> Thus, in the Old Testament, the possibility of lying signs and wonders is assumed. The sign might be real, and yet the teaching false. <sup>3</sup> The Egyptian magicians, moreover, were able to work signs. And, in the New Testament, Christ refers to those who had the power, for He asked, <sup>4</sup> “By whom do your sons cast them out?” In the case of the seven exorcist Jews at Ephesus, the narrative, on the whole, more naturally implies that they did use the name of the Lord Jesus effectively

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. vii. 11, 22; viii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xi. 19.

over some who had evil spirits. At any rate, it may safely be assumed, that if the words of the Bible are consistent with the non-existence of the power to work miracles without the help of God, the language used by the Apologists is also susceptible of the same meaning.

The above are some reasons to shew that the power of exorcism was not improbably exercised <sup>1</sup> in the Christian Church, and form an answer to some of the objections that have been urged against its exercise. We now proceed to give the positive evidence, which is very strong. Every Apologist, with but one <sup>2</sup> exception, claims for Christians this power ; some of them in the clearest terms, and for *every* Christian.

To begin with Justin Martyr.

He says,—<sup>3</sup> “Numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men, by exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ (who was crucified under Pontius Pilate), have healed, and do heal ; rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.”

Passing by the rest of the <sup>4</sup> Greek Apologists, all of whom, except Clement of Alexandria, give their testimony, we go on to <sup>5</sup> Tertullian. His evidence is of the clearest description. “Let a person,” he says, “be brought

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Middleton's Free Enquiry into the Eccl. Miracles.

<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria. <sup>3</sup> ii Apol. c. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Athen. Ap. c. 27 ; Tat. Orat. c. 16 ; Theoph. ad. Autol. ii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Apol. c. 23.

before your tribunals, who is plainly under demoniacal possession. The wicked spirit commanded to speak by a follower of Christ, will as readily make the truthful assertion that he is a demon, as elsewhere he has falsely asserted that he is a god. . . . What clearer than a work like that? what more trustworthy than such a proof? The simplicity of truth is thus set forth; its own worth sustains it; no ground remains for the least suspicion. Do you say that it is done by magic, or some trick of that sort? You will not say anything of the sort, if you have been allowed the use of your eyes and ears. For what argument can you bring against a thing that is exhibited to the eye in its naked reality?" Tertullian then makes use of the demons, to shew the truth of the doctrines of Christianity, and goes on to say,—“Fearing Christ in God, and God in Christ, they become subject to the servants of God and Christ. So, at our touch and breath, overwhelmed by the thought and realization of those judgment fires, they leave at our command the bodies they have entered, unwilling, distressed, and ashamed before your presence.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Minucius Felix says:—

“Most of your people know that the very demons confess all those things concerning themselves, as often as they are expelled from human bodies, by the torments of our words, and the fire of our prayers. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> This is not a solitary passage in Tert.; Cf. *Apol.* c. 37, 43; *De Spec.* c. 29; *De Test. Anim.* c. 3; *ad. Scap.* c. 2; *De Idol.* c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Octavius c. 27.

Having been adjured in the name of the only true God, the wretches unwillingly shudder in those bodies which they possess ; and they either instantly spring forth, or go by degrees, as the faith of the sufferer assists, or the grace of the healer influences."

Cyprian's account has all the vividness of the description of an eye witness :—" Oh, would you but hear and see them when they are adjured by us, and are tortured with spiritual scourges, and are ejected from the possessed bodies with tortures of words, when,—howling and groaning at the voice of man, and the power of God, feeling the stripes and blows,—they confess the judgment to come ! Come, and acknowledge that what we say is true ; and since you say that you thus worship gods, believe even those whom you worship. Or, if you will even believe yourself, he (the demon) who has now possessed your breast, who has now darkened your mind with the night of ignorance, shall speak concerning yourself, in your hearing. You will see that we are entreated by those whom you entreat, that we are feared by those whom you fear, whom you adore. You will see that under our hands they stand bound, and tremble as captives, whom you look up to and venerate as lords. Assuredly, even thus you might be confounded in those errors of yours, when you see and hear your gods, at once, upon our interrogation, betraying what they are, and even in your presence unable to conceal those deceits and trickeries of theirs."

What can be more positive than evidence such as this?



Indeed, scarcely any fact in the history of the early church could be better substantiated than that evil spirits were constantly being cast out of the bodies of men by believers in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

It has, however, been objected that there is a break in the evidence—the earliest extant Ecclesiastical testimony to the existence of the power of exorcism in the church is that of Justin Martyr. The date of his first Apology is placed in A.D. 145 or 146, and thus the break consists of 50 years at the very most. It is important for us to examine the fact, that the Apostolical Fathers, men who lived in the purest and simplest age of Christianity, before that corruption, which, according to some, so soon after set in,—never assert the existence of miraculous powers in the Church.

At the outset, we must make a wide distinction between the absence of evidence, and positive evidence to the contrary: the latter would be almost conclusive; the former may be of little importance; our argument is based on the assumption that miracles were worked in the Church during the Apostolic period. Of this we have sufficient evidence, and yet all the Apostolical writings do not bear witness to it. On the contrary; of the thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, four only, those to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, have any reference to it, and it is a remarkable fact that they are all of one group. Of the other writers of Epistles,

<sup>1</sup> Very similar is the testimony of Lactantius. *Div. Inst.* ii. 15, and [cf. also ii. 17, iv. 27, v. 21. *Arn. adv. gent.* i. 46, i. 50, i. 52.



the author of that to the Hebrews alludes to it; but St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and St. Jude do not. The extant uninspired Christian writings before Justin Martyr are very few in number, and of small extent; but in character they resemble the Canonical Epistles, having a didactic, not an apologetic, nature; and so we cannot be surprised that occurrences so sparingly alluded to in the one, should be altogether passed over in the other.

We shall not stop to enquire whether the writings of the Apostolical Fathers are absolutely destitute of any reference to miraculous powers; but passing by this break in the evidence, which cannot be considered very important, we proceed to make some remarks on the evidence itself. We confess, first of all, that no particular cases are given; the language is general; but this is quite consistent with the description given. According to the Apologists, the fact was notorious. Cures were continually being effected in the most public manner; and if it be argued that such was the case during the times of which we have an inspired account, and that nevertheless we have given to us many particular instances, we answer that the Scriptural accounts were written for all time; the Ecclesiastical, only for their own.

Again, it is said all these accounts are cast in the same mould. There is certainly a very marked similarity in the descriptions given by Tertullian, Cyprian, Minucius Felix, and Lactantius; so marked,

that we cannot but believe that there was some connection between them. But the language each uses would be quite unsuitable in the mouth of one who had not himself witnessed the phenomena of an exorcism, and if witnesses are independent, the agreement of their evidences proves its truth and accuracy. If we have few or no particular instances of the cure of demoniacs, we have, at least, very vivid and particular accounts of the phenomena of cures. Origen, with his philosophic spirit, was perhaps least likely of all the Apologists to be deceived in this matter, and he asserts plainly, that he was an eye-witness of miraculous occurrences. <sup>1</sup> "We ourselves have seen them," he says. <sup>2</sup> And again, "many such instances (exorcisms, miraculous cures) have we known, which, if we were to commit to writing, although they were seen and witnessed by ourselves, we should afford great occasion for ridicule to unbelievers; who would imagine that we, like those whom they suppose to have invented such things, had ourselves also done the same. For God is the witness of our conscience, that we do not desire to recommend the Divine doctrine of Jesus by false tales, but by clear and various arguments."

Nor is the evidence confined to any particular church, or any particular school of doctrine, or any particular time, in the Apologetic period. It is witnessed to by Origen of the liberal Alexandrian school, who had acquaintance with so many of the

<sup>1</sup> Orig. c. Cels. ii. 8.      <sup>2</sup> i. 46.

churches in Asia and Africa ; by Tertullian, with his rigid adherence to Christianity, apart from all other knowledge ; by Cyprian, the active bishop ; and by Justin, the philosopher. That the power was claimed there is not the slightest room to doubt, for heathen <sup>1</sup> confess it. The claim stood the test of persecution, and that for three centuries. <sup>2</sup> So thoroughly convinced was Tertullian of its truth, that he was ready to risk all, on the encounter of any humble Christian with any possessed man. How easy it would have been for some sceptical Roman magistrate, harassed by the obstinate adherence of the Christians to their faith, to have brought the matter to this simple test, and have overwhelmed with confusion the presumptuous Christian who claimed such tremendous powers. Here the Christians offered a test,—easy of trial, decisive in issue,—and yet we have no record of its being accepted, or of the triumphant exultation with which a Christian failure would have been greeted.

We readily admit that Tertullian's Apology, confined at first to a single manuscript, had not anything like the same publicity that a book of the present day, with its thousand copies, has ; but it had publicity to some extent ; its merits excited such attention that it was translated into Greek. Tertullian, though an enthusiast, was a thoroughly honest man. He did not make this challenge because he thought no one likely to take any notice of it, would read his work ; he made it *bonâ fide*,

<sup>1</sup> Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry.      <sup>2</sup> Apol. c. 23.

wishful that it should be accepted, and yet, apparently, it never was. How, then, is it possible to suppose that these claims, exposed to the scrutiny of implacable enemies,—made persistently for three centuries by men of the highest character and intelligence, of different races and opinions,—can have had no foundation in fact; were either a wilful lie, or the ravings of a credulous age!

But the age no doubt *was* credulous, and we proceed to examine into the nature and origin of its credulity. The Apologists were certainly very liable to be deceived by spurious writings. They continually quote, as inspired books, the forgeries of their own, or not much earlier, times. Justin quotes the Christian Sibyl, and the prophecies of Hystaspes, as genuine documents. The former is often referred to by the Apologists as the inspired Word of God. Lactantius is aware that its authenticity is disputed, and vindicates it. He thinks it sufficient to say that the book is quoted by Cicero and Varro. We admit to the full that the Apologists, like all men, Heathen and Christians, of their time, were almost destitute of the critical faculty; and yet, in estimating the credulity of the age, we must never forget that its great act of critical decision, the formation of the Canon, though reviewed by many Christian ages, has been acquiesced in by all. We find another proof of credulity in the readiness of the Apologists to admit mere rumours on insufficient evidence. Some, indeed, of the stories

which are quoted as a proof of this cannot be accepted as such; as, for instance, Justin's story of the deification of Simon Magus, and Tertullian's story of Tiberius; learned men in the critical nineteenth century are divided as to their truth, and so the offence cannot be so flagrant after all. Statements are, however, made by the Apologists, which shew how ready they were to accept all reports as true. Theophilus believed the remains of the ark were still to be seen on Mount Ararat. The author of the Hortatory Address, ascribed to Justin, had seen the seventy cells in which the LXX. had translated the Old Testament. Tertullian readily accepted the story of the thundering legion. We are quite ready to admit that these facts shew a remarkable amount of credulity in men of learning, intelligence, and research.

But, with one exception (that of the seventy cells in Alexandria, which probably rested on a legend, and thus, ultimately, may be resolved into the same type), all the instances named shew credulity of the ear, not credulity of the eye; liability to be deceived, by a too ready credence to reports, not in an examination into the character of phenomena; and all of them may be put down to difficulties of communication and comparison. Criticism rests on the power of comparison, and is a product of facility of communication; it dates from the invention of printing, when multiplied copies of books enabled men to examine the works of distant countries



with facility, and thus to determine the characteristics of the writings of different ages, nations, and men. It has received its great development in our own day, when the means of communication have attained their present high state of perfection; when documents can be traced up immediately to their origin, and little room is left for deception. How could this be done in ancient times? A man finds a document in some corner of a library, purporting to be of a certain age, and to be written by a certain man. What facilities had the finder for discovering the characteristics of the writings of the age, nation, or man? As he had no means of making the enquiry, he naturally had no desire to make it; and if he found in the work passages of great importance to him, for the support of his opinions, no wonder he adopted them. Even in our own day, with all our facilities, we are liable to be deceived by forgeries, especially of the writings of another nation. Had there been no easy inter-communication with France, it would have been long before the French experts had discovered the spuriousness of the documents published by M. Chasles. Chatterton, with few facilities, young as he was, was able to deceive all England for a time in the last century; and if these things happen in our critical age, how can we wonder if less clever forgeries deceived the early Christians. Does, then, the credulity which they shew, at all weaken their evidence on matters which came under their own observation? Does it affect the truth of the accounts



they give us of demoniacal possession, and successful Christian exorcism?

One remaining fault in the Apologists must be mentioned,—their wildness of interpretation. They take a text, apart from the context, and give it an arbitrary explanation. They explain facts of history mystically, though it does not appear that they deny an historical interpretation. They find coincidences in the slightest resemblances ;—<sup>1</sup> all the facts and doctrines of the New Testament in the ritual of the tabernacle or the history of the Jews. Still they do not, like others, lay exclusive stress on <sup>2</sup> their allegorical interpretations ; even Origen allows that there is a literal sense to Scripture, but contends there is much more. The same spirit is observed in their treatment of the writings of the philosophers and poets ; if they find the slightest resemblances to Christian facts and doctrines, at once they accuse them of plagiarism. When, however, we compare them with others of the same age ; with the allegorizing Jews of the Alexandrian school ; with philosophers resolving the history of the gods into myths representing the facts of nature ; and, with heretics, finding their doctrines and systems of *Æons* in the New Testament ; we must feel that their faults were faults of the time, and that, in many respects, they were superior to those around them. There is a deep truth at the bottom of their allegorical interpretations. They believed that all the Scriptures testified

<sup>1</sup> Just. Dial. c. 42.

<sup>2</sup> c. Celsum, ii. 6.

of Christ ; they had authority for thus using them in the New Testament. Unhappily, they carried their principle to excess, and, where they might have found illustrations, found arguments. Such is the character of the credulity of the Apologists ; their mistakes and their errors, may surely be put down to the circumstances of, and paralleled by instances from their own times ; and do not throw any discredit on the evidence they give us concerning facts which they saw with their own eyes.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

WE have now before us materials for estimating the value of the Apologetic writings ; or rather, in giving their character, we have already, incidentally, estimated their value ; it only remains to sum up results.

The question of value seems to resolve itself into two parts ;—the value of these writings to their own times, and the value to ours. The first question is a very difficult one, for we have little to guide us to a satisfactory decision. The enquiry at once suggests itself, to what extent were the Apologies known ? Were many copies made of them ? We have not evidence sufficient to answer the question. There are traces that the Apologies had a certain circulation amongst Christians. This the connection of the Apologies with one another proves ; when, however, we come to the Heathen we are utterly in the dark. The only positive evidence we have is the connection of the Edict of Antonius Pius with the Apology of <sup>1</sup> Justin, by Eusebius ; but the authenticity of the Edict is disputed. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eus. Hist. Ecc. iv. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Orig. c. Celsum iv. 52.

Celsus, with all his great reading, only refers to one of the Apologetic writings, not now extant,—the dialogue of Papiscus and Jason ; but as mere fragments of his work remain, it is impossible to say that he did not refer to others. It is in the formal attacks on Christianity that we should expect to find references to the defences, and obtain hints of their influence on the heathen mind ;<sup>1</sup> unhappily, however, a mistaken zeal induced the Christians to destroy works like these.

Whatever the value of the Apologies was to their own times, it would be absurd to suppose that they were the chief means of disseminating a knowledge of the Christians and Christianity. In those days, when few could read, and copies of books were rare, information about any matter must, for the most part, have been obtained by word of mouth.

Passing by, then, the question of the value of the Apologies to their own times, we enquire what is their value to ours? This is of a two-fold character,—formal and incidental. The writings of the early Apologists have no doubt formed a storehouse for later defenders of the faith. Paley's arguments from miracles are to be found in Arnobius and Origen. <sup>2</sup> Grotius uses them in various parts of his work. Bishop Butler would find the argument from analogy expanded further than in the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians.

<sup>1</sup> Soc. Hist. i. 9.

<sup>2</sup> De. Veritate, i. 16; ii. 5; iii. 7; iii. 18; iv. 8.

The chief value of the Apologists is, however, incidental. All that can be said of their formal use to us is, that they were the first to advance arguments which the nature of Christianity supplied. Christians in later times could have deduced arguments for Christianity; but they could not have given us that picture of Christian society, which we derive principally from the Apologists,—a society which was so strange a phenomenon of the times, and which gives so bright an example to Christians of later ages,—a society whose character forms such an important witness to the strength of Christianity, when its principles are carried out to the full. Between the Church of the present day, and the early Church, there is a deep gulf; our professions do not come up to their practice. One lesson to be derived from the history of the first three centuries is, that no state can be so profitable to the purity and healthy increase of the Church as a state of persecution. The thirty years of rest before Decius' accession were sufficient to make the Church worldly; the persecution under Decius cleansed it. In the first part of the persecution there were many waverers, afterwards all stood firm. <sup>1</sup> The Apologists seem to consider the steady endurance of sufferings by the Christians, the chief means of propagating Christianity. Men were led to enquire into the causes of such fortitude, and antecedent prejudices were removed; they were able to examine Chris-

<sup>1</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 50; Lact. Div. Inst. v. 13, 22;  
Arn. adv. gentes, ii. 12.

tianity fairly, and, in this spirit, they were sure to accept it.

The intense hold that Christianity had on the Christians is visible in every page of the Apologies. They had a thorough conviction that they had found the truth in Christianity, they felt nothing in the world could be placed beside it, and they counted all else as dung. We see in this a proof of the strength of the conviction which the early Christians had of the truth of the facts of Christ's life, and the Divinity of His nature. They were not eye-witnesses, nor even, for the most part, did they derive their information from eye-witnesses,—and yet they believed. It is from this earnest belief, as shewn by men of good judgment and learning, that <sup>1</sup> Grotius derives one of his proofs of the truth of the Christian religion. He instances men of different character, and nations, and times; men who had early prejudices to overcome; who were not born Christians; who, after the diligent inquiry which it became prudent men to make, gave up honour and profit, and exposed themselves to dangers and sufferings, for the sake of worshipping a man put to death ignominiously. One only reason, he says, can be assigned for such conduct, a thorough belief in the report spread abroad that Christ had the power of working miracles, and these of such a character that they could not be ascribed to magic, or juggling, but must have been the works of Divine power; works which

<sup>1</sup> De Veritate, ii. 4.



proved his doctrine to be true. The Apostles were original witnesses; they had seen, and they believed. The early Christians were not original witnesses; they had to trust to other testimony; they went through precisely the same toils and sufferings, in attestation of the accounts they received, as the Apostles did. Surely it is blessed for us, as it was blessed for them, that they, not having seen, believed.

In one other respect the evidence of the early Christians is more important than even that of the Apostles; the latter had the power of working miracles. In this they would have ever fresh evidence that the doctrine they taught was divine; this power did not exist to anything like the same extent in the early Church; it was left more to itself; it had to walk mainly by faith, but it had no doubts; it had a thorough conviction that it lived in the presence, and by the power, of Christ; it realized, from the heart, the transcendent importance of the things of the unseen world.

It is in this, then, we place the great value of the Apologists. To them we owe our conception of the Christian Society in early times, and in it we see a Divine power. They have given us a picture of the social condition of the nations of the earth before Christ came; and, contrasting it with our own, we see what Christianity has done for the world. That the world is not now what it was then, we owe to Christianity, and to Christianity alone. The world seemed

waxing old, and was thoroughly corrupt, when Christ came ; Christianity put a new life into it ; it united men into a common brotherhood ; it gave them the liberty of those whom the Son makes free ; it gave them a hope beyond the grave ; these three things have been living powers in the world, though they have had the vices and weakness of men to struggle against.

It is to the Apologists we owe our knowledge of what Christianity delivered us from. We could not obtain our information from heathen of the time. The light of Christianity was necessary to shew the gross darkness which covered the nations. The Christians had lived formerly like the heathen around them, and suddenly a light shone which has never ceased to shine. They had been "sometime darkness, now they were light in the Lord." The darkness has long ago passed away, but we need the testimony of those who saw the darkness before the dawn, to realize how great was that darkness. It is in this that we place the value of the Apologetic writings. They teach us what Christianity can do, if only its facts are thoroughly believed, and its principles thoroughly carried out. They teach us in these days, when States withdraw their aid, that the Church has no need of such aids ;—they point to triumphs achieved in spite of all the State could do ; and they encourage us to trust, when extraneous supports fail, in the strength of Christianity, and the presence of Christ. Once more the Church may have to

say, "Silver and gold have I none," and then, the thing which she has, which is hers by Divine right, which no States gave, and which no State can take away, she will give in richer measure to her children ; and, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, men will rise up and walk.

FINIS.





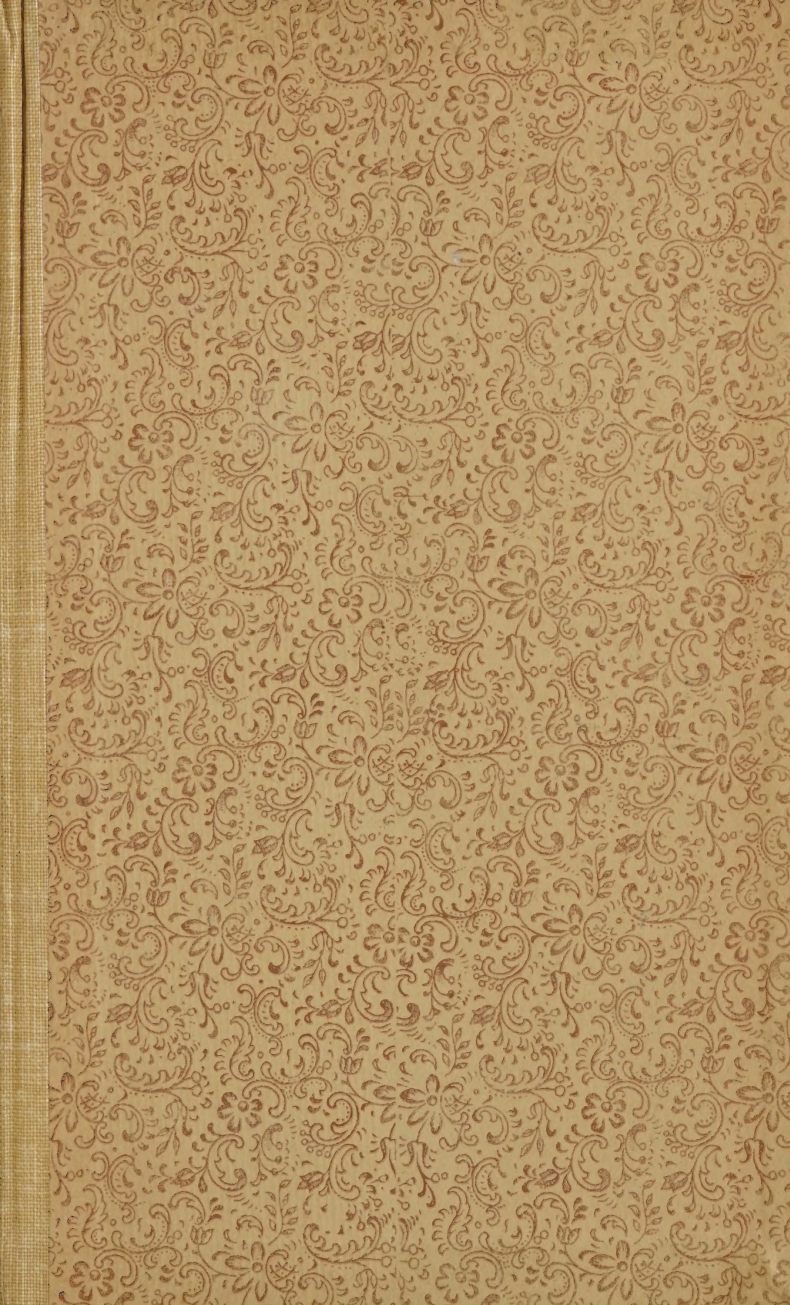






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